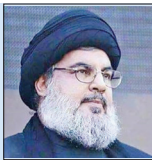




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# Douma chemical attack: A plot to save terrorists

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## Enemies worried about Iran’s rising power: Leader

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said on Sunday that enemies are afraid of Iran because the country’s power is on the rise. “Enemies have strongly felt a threat,” Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, speaking to a number of top military officials.

The current time is a time of power and pride for Iran, he said, adding despite all schemes the power of Iran will increase each day.

The Leader went on to underline that the main mission of the military is to ensure the might and security of Iran and the power to react to threats at the right time.

## Iran can resume enriching uranium to 20% purity in 4 days, Salehi insists

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran’s top nuclear official, insisted on Sunday that his nuclear organization can resume enriching uranium to purity of 20% in 4 days at the Fordow plant if the nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, is scrapped.

Salehi had made similar remarks in the past. A readiness by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to return

to pre-JCPOA situation is serious and not a “political bluff”, Salehi, a nuclear physicist, pointed out.

In a statement on January 12, U.S. President Donald Trump gave Europeans only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement. He threatened if the text of the nuclear deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it. The deadline ends on May 12. **→2**

## Tehran mayor’s resignation rejected

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Tehran City Council on Sunday rejected the resignation of Tehran Mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi.

Najafi, was sworn in as mayor at the Tehran City Council on September 5, 2017. His predecessor was Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who held the post for some 12 years.

Since the very beginning of his career he faced a barrage of criticism mainly related

to urban management issues including air pollution, the traffic scheme, Tehran earthquake, heavy snowfall. And finally after six months, he handed in his resignation on March 14.

“The main reason behind my resignation is my disease, and continuing to hold the post is a betrayal,” Najafi told a session of the council to either accept or reject his resignation on Sunday. **→12**



## ARTICLE

**Osman Faruk Logoglu**  
Member of Turkey’s Republican  
People’s Party (CHP)

## Trump expects Turkey to side with U.S. aggressive policy toward Iran

The erratic and unending changes in the administration by President Trump reflect first and foremost his unique conception of the Presidency. He views the Presidency as being the CEO of USA, Inc. He prefers to work with individuals who will not challenge or disagree with him. The choice of Bolton and Pompeo as National Security Adviser and Secretary of State respectively has also a lot to do with the more aggressive hard-power driven foreign policy Trump wants to pursue. Both men are known not only for their hawkish positions but also for their willingness to implement their radical views and to use American military power. The changes have been dubbed as the “war cabinet”, a fitting description indeed.

How these changes will affect Turkish-American relations remains yet to be seen. Both Bolton and Pompeo had, in their previous lives, made highly disparaging comments about Turkey, criticizing the Turkish government for its policies at home and abroad. Since then, they have not said anything to amend those most negative views. So the prospects for Turkish-American relations are not necessarily encouraging with these two men in office.

The key question now is how the two sides will handle the question of Menbij in Syria. Turkey threatens military action there to clean the area of Kurdish YPG listed by Turkey as a terrorist organization. The area is currently under the joint control of American forces and SDF, the core of which is the YPG. The initial bilateral talks at the level of high officials in Washington have not produced an agreement. Now it is reported that talks would be resumed after Pompeo is sworn in as the new Secretary of State in May.

Trump has recently signaled early withdrawal from Syria, citing “high financial costs” of American engagement. But Pentagon and other administration sources have downplayed the Trump announcement, indicating that the U.S. is there to stay. I believe Trump will not withdraw from Syria. First, his number one mission of defeating ISIL is not yet accomplished. Second, he will not abandon Syria to the Russians. **→7**

## Prof. Zonis: Trump’s tariff policy global effect to be less than expected

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN** — Professor Marvin Zonis believes that due to many tariff exceptions to be offered to other countries by the Trump administration the overall effect of his decision on global economy will be less than expected.

The United States President Donald Trump’s decision to impose stiff tariffs on steel and aluminum imports opened up another debate among politicians and experts.

The U.S. will institute tariffs of 25 percent and 10 percent on imports of steel and aluminum, respectively, as early as next week, Trump said. It will apply the tariffs broadly, without targeting specific countries, and will not impose quotas.

Trump argues the tariffs will help the US industries and workers “destroyed” by unfair trade practices. He told steel and aluminum executives that their industries will have “protection for the first time in a while.”

Though Trump cast the move as a win for Americans, many experts warned of possible cost increases for consumers and manufacturers.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

■ How will President Trump’s decision to boost tariffs impact U.S. domestic steel and aluminum producers?

A: It will boost domestic production and increase domestic costs so a net loser for the entire U.S. economy.

■ How will it actually impact the aluminum and steel industries globally then?

A: Many exceptions will be offered to other countries so the overall effect will be less than expected.

■ Considering some of the beneficiaries behind his decision are there other internal or external beneficiaries in addition to the companies in America, or is it just American companies who are going to benefit from this decision?

A: Canadian and Mexican producers will benefit as they have already received exemptions. **→7**

## A contemplation on the U.S.-China trade war

By Hanif Ghaffari

**TEHRAN** — The trade war raised between the United States and China has entered a new phase. In 2017, there existed a verbal conflict between Washington and Beijing, but now we are witnessing a perfect pragmatic dispute between the two countries.

The United States’ threatening approach towards China (which was reflected in Trump’s National Security Doctrine) has led to an intensification of the conflict in 2018. Trump seems to be actualizing his protectionist economic slogans during the 2016 presidential competitions.

During his campaign, Trump claimed that the economic cooperation between Washington and Beijing had a devastating effect on the

U.S. economy, and that this process should be modified using economic restraint approaches.

Imposing tariffs on Chinese imported goods, imposing strict importing laws and regulations, enhancing import controls, etc. are among the measures that Trump intends to put into effect and thus, start a full-fledged confrontation with Beijing.

At the other side, Beijing announced that it’s going to stand against the United States until the last minute, and will, in return, impose restrictive rules on American goods and companies in China. Last month and in spite of global objection, Trump announced that there will be tariffs on steel and aluminum imports; 25% on imported steel and 10% on imported aluminum

to the United States.

Following this order, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce also announced that it will impose tariffs on 128 items of imported goods by the United States, including pork and fruits.

Here are some points that should be taken into consideration: Firstly, the economic conflict between the United States and China will further exacerbate the economic players in the international system, including the European Union.

The European Union has not yet responded decisively to Donald Trump’s protectionist economic measures. However, the Chinese have shown their opposition to Trump government with their countermeasures against the United States. **→7**



## REPORT

**Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh**  
Tehran Times Journalist

## Foreign currency jump rears ugly head in domestic production, exports

The new Iranian year, which began on March 21, has been named by Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei as the year of “Support for Iranian Products”. In general, supporting national products is expected to improve the level of Iran’s exports, however, regarding the current conditions at domestic foreign exchange market, puts the idea under some disputations.

In mid-February, Iranian forex market experienced the biggest and (un)expected crackdown on foreign exchanges and rial depreciation within the past six years. At the time, U.S. dollar broke all records and jumped to almost 50,000 rials in Tehran’s currency exchange shops, while it used to be bought almost 37,500 rials earlier in past April, 38,000 rials in past September, 41,000 rials in past December and 43,000 rials in early January, 2018. Dollar went on its upward trend and its official rate currently stands at about 48,940 rials and its free market rate is above 51,000 rials.

Some including Mehdi Poorghazi, the head of Industry and Mine Commission of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TC-CIMA) believe that increase in foreign exchange rate will boost exports of Iranian products. Proponents of foreign currency rate increase also refer to Central Bank of Iran’s latest data, according to which Iran’s Export Price Index (EPI), a factor which is affected by foreign exchange rates and global commodity prices. The index stood at 323.1 in the 11th Iranian month of Bahman (January 21-February 19, 2018), registering a 7.5 percent increase compared to the preceding month and a 33.5 percent rise compared with last year’s corresponding period. The average EPI during the 11 months to Feb. 19 witnessed a 19.4% growth year-on-year, IRNA reported.

In contrast, critics express that any growth in foreign exchange rate will not only help exports of national products but also it will increase their total costs and makes them more expensive than the imported similar goods. **→4**



© Tehran Times / Milad Rafat

## Sailors celebrate end of voyage with Razif ritual

Iranian sailors perform Razif ritual, a time-honored musical folk dance, while boarding a wooden launch off the coasts of Bandar-e Kong in the Persian Gulf, April 7, 2018.

Razif used to be played out by native sailors before they set foot on the mainland to get rid of long-journey exhaustion.

Over the past decades that motor-vessels have become more prevalent, such cultural heritage seems to be fading away.

Nowadays, Razif is usually practiced in wedding celebrations and other cheerful ceremonies across the region.



## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



### No restriction for political parties: minister

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The last Iranian year of 1396 saw an increased political activity, the interior minister said on Sunday, emphasizing that the Rouhani administration has no problems with the activity of different political parties or groups.

Speaking at a meeting with the Interior Ministry staff in Tehran, Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli said with regard to holding political meetings and the activities of journals, there is no restriction in the country, Mehr reported.



### Zarif to address CFR on Iran-U.S. ties

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is scheduled to address the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) on April 23 with a focus on Iran-U.S. ties, regional politics, and the future of the Iran nuclear deal, CFR reported on its website.

The U.S. administration has done a great deal during the past year to kill the Iran nuclear deal, also known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

This is while the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed ten times Iran's commitment to the landmark July 2015 international deal.



### 'Tehran backs sustainable security in Lebanon'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Foreign Ministry has rejected claims by a local newspaper criticizing Tehran's role in Lebanon, saying the Islamic Republic has always supported lasting stability and security in Lebanon.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported enduring solidarity, stability and security in Lebanon and spared no effort to maintain and boost unity among the country's ethnicities and political groups," ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday, according to Press TV.

He further said the newspaper's allegations run counter to Iran's stance and its approach of pursuing understanding in Lebanon over the past four decades.



### 83 nuclear achievements to be unveiled on Monday

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Some 83 nuclear achievements in nuclear industry are scheduled to be unveiled on Monday (April 9), which Iran marks as National Nuclear Day.

Ali Asghar Zare'an, an advisor to chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said on Sunday the nuclear achievements will be unveiled at the presence of President Hassan Rouhani and a number of top officials, including ministers and military commanders, IRNA reported.

He pointed to last year's National Nuclear Day during which 42 nuclear achievements were unveiled, saying fortunately this year the "number of achievements have nearly doubled".



### Albright: Exiting Iran deal would hurt U.S. reputation

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has criticized President Donald Trump for trying to exit the Iran nuclear deal, saying such an act could "undermine America's reputation for trustworthiness."

"His threat to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement could unravel a pact that has made the world safer and could undermine America's reputation for trustworthiness at a critical moment," Albright said in an article in the New York Times published on April 6.

She also said the possibility that fascism will be accorded a fresh chance to strut around the world stage is enhanced by the volatile presidency of Donald Trump.



### Bribe cases in Tehran, Beirut embassies under investigation: Berlin

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Berlin prosecutor has placed a number of bribery cases in Germany's embassies in Tehran and Beirut under judicial investigation, a spokesman for the Berlin prosecutor's office has said.

Martin Steltner said some visa applicants have managed to obtain visas from the German embassies in Tehran and Beirut by paying thousands of euros in bribes, ISNA reported on Sunday, citing a report in Der Spiegel magazine.

According to the report, the amount of bribes paid by each individual has been between 5 to 10 thousand euros. The spokesman has declined to provide further details.

# Iran to pursue interests if U.S. quits JCPOA: Velayati



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior advisor to the Supreme Leader on international affairs, has warned that if the U.S. withdraws from the nuclear deal, Tehran would not hesitate to act upon its national interests.

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting with the Russian Valdai Discussion Club professors on Sunday in Tehran, Ali Akbar Velayati said, "Iran does not have to put itself in a dead-end regarding the JCPOA."

The JCPOA is the official name of the nuclear deal signed between Iran, the European Union, Germany, and five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Velayati said Iran keeps all options on the table.

A day earlier, a senior Iranian lawmaker said the Islamic Republic will definitely walk away from the nuclear deal if the United States re-imposes sanctions on Tehran.

"The most important objective of the JCPOA was the lifting of sanctions," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

"If ... sanctions are re-imposed on Iran,

we definitely will not remain in the JCPOA," he added, according to Press TV.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said on Thursday that Washington would probably get out of the Iran nuclear deal and re-impose sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

She accused Iran of supporting terrorism and violating the terms of the JCPOA and claimed Europeans were closing their eyes on this, but the U.S. would not do so.

The Iranian lawmaker rejected Haley's comments that Tehran would not pull out of the JCPOA because it intended to con-

tinue trade ties with European countries.

In her Thursday lecture at Duke University, Haley said, "The Europeans stay in the deal. Fine. They can have it. We can put our sanctions back on. Iran is not going to get out of that deal. They want the trade with the Europeans. They want to keep the \$100 billion that they have. They are not going to leave, but we don't have to be a part of it."

Boroujerdi further emphasized that Iran makes decisions based on its own national interests.

He said if sanctions were set to be re-imposed on Tehran after a possible U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran's remaining in the JCPOA would not secure the country's objectives.

The senior legislator emphasized that Iran would maintain its ties with European countries as long as mutual interests are protected.

U.S. President Donald Trump on January 12 reluctantly agreed to waive sanctions against Iran that were lifted as part of the landmark deal, but said it would be the last time he issued such a waiver unless the agreement is revised.

## Palestinians will shatter U.S., Saudi illusions, Larijani says



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has predicted that the Palestinian youths will shatter all of the "illusions" of the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Addressing an open session of the parliament on Sunday, Larijani said the U.S. and some Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, are secretly attempting to undermine security in the region in order to limit the Palestinians to the Gaza Strip and a "corner" of the West Bank, IRNA reported.

Pointing to Riyadh's tacit recognition of the Zionist regime, the parliament speaker said the Saudis are interested in bestowing their country's national wealth to the Americans in order to buy Washington's support.

"The fact that the Saudis have announced that their actions in organizing Takfiri terrorist groups and killing thousands of people have been guided by America is an alarm for the world and the region; they have done evil deeds in the name of religion and philanthropy," he stated.

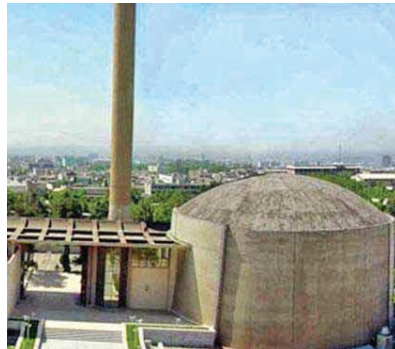
Larijani also called on Islamic countries and parliaments to support the Palestinian people in the face of a new wave of Israeli violence.

In two consecutive Fridays, March 30 and April 30, Israeli forces killed 30 Palestinians in Gaza for holding rallies near the Israeli fence.

Larijani said the responsibility to support Palestine and prevent a shame in the Arab world falls upon the thinkers and parliaments of Islamic and Arab states.

He further said Iran's parliament would ask the Islamic Inter-Parliamentary Union (IIPU) and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) to support the oppressed Palestinian nation against the Israeli brutality.

## Iranian experts have reconstructed Tehran research reactor



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, announced in a televised program late on Saturday that Iranian experts have succeeded to reconstruct the Tehran research reactor.

"The Tehran reactor is 40 years old and it has been for over a year and a half that we are renewing its various parts," Salehi said.

Salehi said for the first time a new nuclear fuel test loop has been built in the research reactor to test the resilience of the nuclear fuels used in power plants.

Iranian experts have done the entire reconstruction process, the nuclear chief said, adding they have also built the essential equipment for the reactor.

"Those who have expertise [in this field] are aware what a great job has been done in renewing the Tehran research reactor. We can test the fuel in an active way and this is a great achievement," Salehi, a nuclear physicist, explained.

He added that works are being done to produce new fuels in this reactor. So far, the reactor has been operating just in specific hours per week but there is a plan to "keep it working permanently", he said.

Iran in recent years has made great progress in building equipment in nuclear technology.

April 9 marks "nuclear technology day" in Iran. Iran is expected to unveil advances in nuclear technology on Monday.

## Tehran to help if Saudis consider political solution to Yemen crisis: Zarif

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Tehran is ready to offer any diplomatic assistance to help resolve the ongoing Yemeni crisis if Saudi Arabia considers a political solution.

Speaking to BBC Arabic in an interview published on Sunday, Zarif said Iran would certainly support a political solution.

He added, "Any approach should be based on inter-Yemeni talks."

"We believed in the beginning that a political solution should be reached in Yemen. Long before the Yemeni crisis escalated we proposed to Saudi Arabia to help a political approach."

"The answer was that the affairs of the Arab world did not concern us.... It is a pity that Saudi Arabia and

its allies always rejected a political solution and were hoping for victory in a military conflict," the chief diplomat regretted.

He added, "The current situation is the outcome of the wrong choices Saudi Arabia has made. We do not want to hurt our neighbors. We believe their security is ours. But we are not responsible for their wrong choices."

## Zarif leading big delegation to Africa, Latin America

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian foreign minister set off on a trip to Africa and Latin America on Sunday afternoon. Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said the top diplomat was leading a big ranking political and economic delegation on the tour, which will take him to Senegal, Namibia, Brazil, and Uruguay.

Also accompanying him are representatives of dozens of Iranian companies as well as en-

trepreneurs active in commercial, economic, scientific fields from public and private sectors.

According to Qassemi, the minister will be holding meetings with political, economic, and parliamentary officials from the four countries. He will also be delivering addresses at joint economic and commercial gatherings as well as some think tanks.

Zarif toured Africa last October, visiting South Africa, Uganda, and Niger.

## Iran can resume enriching uranium to 20% purity in 4 days, Salehi insists

**1 →** Salehi said it will be "disgraceful" for Europe if it gives in to the U.S. in scrapping the nuclear deal.

"If Europe gives in to the U.S., it means that Europe is not independent... and this is disgraceful for the European countries," noted Salehi, who acted as foreign minister from 2011 to 2013.

Based on the nuclear agreement,

Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic and financial sanctions.

The deal was signed between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council including the United States. It went into effect in January 16, 2016.

## 'U.S. exit from nuclear deal will deepen division with Europe'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Mohammad Ali Hosseini, the former Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, has said that a U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal will deepen its division with European countries.

In an interview with Fars news agency published on Sunday, Hosseini said the European countries consider the deal a great achievement for multilateral diplomacy and has prevented the U.S. from scrapping the agreement so far.

He also said U.S. President Donald Trump makes efforts to mobilize Europe for exerting pressure on Iran in non-nuclear areas.



## Tehran will end limits on nuclear work if U.S. exits JCPOA: ex-diplomat

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Hamid Reza Assefi, a former Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, said on Sunday that Iran has various options if the U.S. pulls out of 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

If the U.S. withdraws from the deal, there will be no reason for Iran to continue respecting restrictions on its nuclear program under the agreement, Assefi said.

"Iran can move toward nuclear enrich-

ment to purity of 20% purity and higher than that, and can make changes to the Arak and Fordow plants immediately," he noted.

Nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi said in August last year that Iran can resume uranium enrichment to the purity of 20 percent in five days in the Fordow plant if necessary.

Assefi also said that the U.S. will be "loser" if it takes "irresponsible act" of quitting the nuclear agreement.

Scrapping the JCPOA will be highly cost for the U.S., the former diplomat remarked.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to pull out of the deal. In his new policy declared on January 12, Trump gave Congress and European allies four months to fix what he claims "disastrous flaws" in the deal otherwise he will withdraw the U.S. from it.

Trump said the nuclear deal should include Iran's defense program including missiles.

The nuclear deal was struck in July 2015 and went into effect in January 2016.

The former diplomat said the Trump administration is firm to deprive Iran of the benefits of the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

In a statement on January 12, Trump set a May deadline and gave Europeans only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement. He threatened if the text of the nuclear deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union struck the nuclear deal in July 2015. It went into effect in January 2016.

According to the nuclear agreement signed between Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union, Tehran agreed to put limits on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has issued ten reports each time confirming Tehran's complete compliance with the multilateral agreement.



# Iran and Qatar high on agenda as MBS arrives in France

## French MPs urge inquiry into arms sales to Saudi regime

by staff & agencies

When French President Emmanuel Macron flew into Riyadh for hastily arranged talks with the House of Saud regime's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) in November it was all smiles in public, but in private a tough dialogue over Iran signaled a change between the allies.

Whether that was a momentary tiff or a longer-lasting complication may become clear when the prince, arrives in Paris on Sunday for a two-day visit that will focus on the crises in Yemen, Syria and Qatar and the regional power house Iran's nuclear deal.

After trips to Britain and the United States with major contracts envisaged, MBS will attend cultural events, political meetings and an economic forum. While a tourism project between the two countries will be announced, MBS is not expected to clinch any mega-deals.

French officials dismiss any notion that the absence of huge contracts reflects any weakening in the relationship, saying they seek a new "method" of working with the world's largest oil exporter that does not depend on eye-catching new business.

A warm relationship between Riyadh and Macron's predecessor Francois Hollande did not result in the sharp expansion of business Paris had sought.

But analysts note the 32-year-old crown prince has emphasized closer ties with the U.S. President Donald Trump just at a time when Macron has, in turn, sought to improve relations with Iran and vowed to preserve the nuclear deal.

Several Western and Arab diplomats describe the November exchange as tense. According to three officials, the meeting was dominated by MBS threatening to curb relations with France if Macron did not alter his desire to dialogue with Iran, the regional power house, and push business interests there.

Macron, the officials said, reminded MBS of France's position in the world as a nuclear power, permanent member of the Security Council member and that France was free to do what it wanted.

While Macron recognizes the reforming aspirations, he sees that MBS could be a real loose cannon and what he is doing in Yemen and Qatar and the talk on Iran has potential to add fuel to regional fire.

In recent years, France had nurtured new links with the Persian Gulf Arab states due to its tough stance on Iran in nuclear negotiations, and the broad similarity of their policies on conflicts across the Middle East.



However, MBS's uncompromising efforts to counter Iran's growing influence in the combustible Middle East are sometimes perceived as reckless in Paris.

The visit comes amid growing pressure on Macron at home from lawmakers and rights groups over France's weapons sales to the Saudi regime-led coalition fighting defenseless Yemeni people.

A private letter sent to Macron from 12 international non-governmental organizations urged him to pressure MBS to ease a blockade on Yemeni ports and suspend French arms sales.

**French MPs urge inquiry into arms sales to Saudi regime as MBS visits**  
Meantime, over a dozen French lawmakers have called for an investigation into the country's lucrative weapons sales to the House of Saud regime as bin Salman visits Paris.

MP Sebastien Nadot said he and 15 other co-signatories had officially filed a request for a 30-member commission of inquiry into France's complicity in the Saudi regime-led war on Yemen.

The commission is "to study France's compliance with international commitments

regarding arms export licenses, munitions, training, services and assistance that our country has granted during these three years to the belligerents of the conflict in Yemen," he added.

The request comes days after 12 international NGOs (non-governmental organizations), including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, sent a private letter to French President Emmanuel Macron urging him to halt arms sales to Riyadh.

They also demanded pressure on bin Salman to ease a blockade on Yemeni ports. "Emmanuel Macron should put Yemen at the center of his discussions with Mohammed bin Salman as he hosts him in France," the rights groups said.

According to a recent YouGov poll, 75 percent of French people want Macron to suspend arms exports to countries involved in the war on Yemen, including the Saudi regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

However, a French presidential source defended the country's arms exports, claiming that Paris "obeys very precise criteria, including the concern for situations in which civilian populations may be endangered."

**Bin Salman rounds off U.S. tour with ex-presidents meeting**

The House of Saud regime's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman rounded off a weeks-long tour of the United States with a weekend in Texas, where he met on Saturday with both former president Bushes.

George H.W. Bush, 93, tweeted a photo of the prince with his son, George W. Bush. "A wonderful chance to celebrate the long-standing friendship between our two nations," George Bush Senior wrote, while the Saudi regime embassy in Washington described the meeting as a "reminder of the strength and breadth of the long-standing Saudi regime-U.S. partnership."

The inexperienced prince traveled with his plentiful entourage from the White House to Houston via Boston, New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and Silicon Valley, embarking on what one expert called a particularly well-planned public relations campaign.

The Saudi regime faced criticism along the way -- although Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti expressed "concerns about human rights and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen," his office told AFP.

## U.S., Afghan forces expand air strikes on Taliban drug labs

American and Afghan forces have expanded their air strikes against drug labs into western Afghanistan, aiming to choke Taliban revenue.

Air strikes in Afghanistan, the world's main heroin source, also threaten civilians, however, and may not be an effective blow to the Taliban terrorist group, an expert on the country's drug industry said.

The campaign targeting Afghan drug labs began as opium production jumped 87 percent last year to a record high in Afghanistan. The Taliban, which the United States officials say controls the drug trade, has made large territorial gains since a U.S. troop reduction of recent years.

American and Afghan forces responded with a dramatic increase in air power since early 2017, with the number of weapons released tripling in the first two months of 2018 compared with a year earlier.

The U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and Afghan

forces conducted strikes on 11 Taliban drug production facilities in the western provinces of Farah and Nimroz this week, the U.S. Forces said on Saturday. The strikes are the first in western Afghanistan and aim to reduce the Taliban's main revenue flow, the U.S. statement said.

"By cutting off the Taliban's economic lifelines, we also reduce their ability to continue these terrorist activities," said Major-General James Hecker.

Drug processing and taxation generate \$200 million annually for the Taliban, the U.S. Forces-Afghanistan estimates.

The drug lab campaign began in November, and has now included 75 strikes, especially in Helmand, the main poppy-growing province. The poppy's fluid, opium, is processed into heroin.

However, David Mansfield, an authority on Afghanistan's opium industry, says bombing labs has a negligible effect on Taliban revenues, because heroin profits and taxes are

not as large as the U.S. Forces estimate and the simple labs can be quickly rebuilt.

Calling strikes on drug labs "the theater of counter-narcotics," Mansfield said the risk of civilian deaths may be greater than potential benefits of curbing Taliban revenues.

"There has been little account of the number of casualties attributed to the bombing of drugs labs," he said in an email to Reuters. "And in contrast to the narrative of USFOR-A, those that work in labs are not seen as Taliban but as civilians" by rural Afghans.

The U.S. Forces-Afghanistan could not be immediately reached for response to Mansfield's critique.

Efforts to reach a Taliban spokesman on Sunday were not successful. In November, the Taliban said there were no drug labs in the area and the U.S. forces were launching attacks based on false information and to spread propaganda.

(Source: Reuters)

## Brazil's Lula turns himself in to police after tense showdown

Brazil's former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has handed himself over to police to begin a 12-year prison sentence for corruption, according to local media.

The 72-year-old left on Saturday the steel-workers union building where he had sought refuge while defying for some 24 hours a court deadline to submit to custody.

Lula was taken away from the premises in an industrial suburb of Sao Paulo in a convoy of black police cars, Globo TV reported.

An earlier attempt to leave the offices had been blocked by a crowd of supporters who opposed his arrest and blocked the exit of the building.

Lula's lawyers had lodged several requests to avoid jail until exhausting all appeals against his corruption conviction, which were all ultimately unsuccessful.

The leftist politician, who was president from 2003 to 2011, was convicted in July of corruption and money-laundering in connection with the renovation of a beachside penthouse he was planning to buy.

The renovation was bankrolled by a company seeking contracts with the state oil giant Petrobras.

The case was linked to the massive Lava Jato corruption scandal surrounding Petrobras, which has led to the jailing of dozens



of entrepreneurs and politicians.

Judge Sergio Moro sentenced Lula to nine-and-a-half years in prison, and an appeals court raised the jail term to 12 years and one month.

The judge had ordered Lula to report to a police station in Curitiba by 5pm (20:00 GMT) on Friday. But Lula skipped the deadline and spent the night holed up inside the

headquarters of the steel-workers union.

Thousands of his supporters surrounded the building overnight, dissuading the police from trying to arrest him.

He finally emerged on Saturday morning for an impromptu mass to commemorate his late wife, Marisa Leticia, who died last year.

In an hour-long speech at the event, Lula accused the judiciary and Brazil's most

powerful media conglomerate of assisting what he described as a right-wing "coup" with the ultimate aim of preventing him from competing in this year's presidential elections.

Despite his legal problems, opinion polls suggest that he will win in the October 7 vote.

During his speech, Lula told cheering supporters that Brazil's top anti-corruption judge "lied" about him being given the luxury apartment by a big construction firm as a kickback.

Lula also rejected multiple suggestions of fleeing or seeking asylum abroad.

The union where Lula had sought refuge served as the launch pad for his career nearly four decades ago, when he led nationwide strikes that helped to end Brazil's 1964-85 military dictatorship.

Lula's everyman style and unvarnished speeches electrified masses and eventually won him two terms as president, from 2003 to 2011, when he oversaw robust economic growth and falling inequality amid a commodities boom.

He left office with a sky-high approval rate of 83 percent and was once called "the most popular politician on Earth" by former United States President Barack Obama.

(Source: agencies)

## British Labor leader slams Israel's killing Palestinians



British Labor Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn has condemned the West's silence over Israel's killing of over 30 Palestinians during anti-occupation rallies in the Gaza Strip.

Corbyn read a message at a rally on Saturday outside Downing Street in London, saying "The silence from international powers with the responsibility of bringing a just settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict must end."

"The killing and wounding of yet more unarmed Palestinian protesters yesterday by Israeli forces in Gaza is an outrage," he told the crowd, adding that "firing live ammunition into crowds of unarmed civilians is illegal and inhumane and cannot be tolerated."

Late last month, Palestinians marched to the fence separating Gaza from the occupied territories at the start of a six-week protest, dubbed "The Great March of Return," demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland.

The demonstrations turned violent after Israeli forces used tear gas and live fire against the protesters.

**'No innocent people' in Gaza Strip**

Meanwhile, Israeli war minister says there are "no innocent people" in the Gaza Strip, which has witnessed deadly violence perpetrated by regime forces against peaceful Palestinian protesters.

"There are no innocent people in the Gaza Strip," Avigdor Lieberman told Israel's public radio on Sunday, claiming that all the Gazans are affiliated with the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

"Everyone's connected to Hamas, everyone gets a salary from Hamas, and all the activists trying to challenge us and breach the [Gaza] border are Hamas military wing activists," he added.

Israel has faced international criticism over its use of live fire after 10 days of protests and clashes along the fence in which its forces have killed 30 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry.

On Thursday, Lieberman threatened to respond to the protests in the "harsh" manner if the demonstrators approach the fence separating Israelis and Palestinians.

"If there are provocations, there will be a reaction of the harshest kind like last week," Lieberman told public radio ahead of fresh anti-occupation protests this weekend.

**Israel to target Hamas if Gaza rallies continue**

Elsewhere, Israel has threatened to strike Hamas which runs the Gaza Strip, if "March of Return" rallies near the fence separating the blockade enclave and the occupied territories continue.

The Israeli daily Haaretz quoted Israeli army sources as saying on Saturday that they would react forcefully if the alleged attempts to damage the fence continued.

Israeli snipers have also been instructed to shoot Palestinians approaching the Gaza fence, according to the report.

Palestinians have marched to the fence as part of a six-week protest, dubbed "The Great March of Return," demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland.

The peaceful demonstrations turned violent after Israeli forces used tear gas and live fire against the protesters.

Gaza was the scene of deadly clashes on Friday, prompting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to call on the United Nations, the Arab League (AL) and the European Union (EU) to take immediate action against the Israeli violence.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the House of Saud regime and Egyptian officials had opened contacts with Hamas leaders to call for an end to the weekly protests in Gaza.

An Egyptian Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying that Cairo would ensure the regular opening of the Rafah border crossing in exchange for a halt to the Gaza demonstrations.

"The situation in the Gaza Strip is nearing an explosion towards anyone blockading it," the source said, "and therefore there is a fear that Palestinian anger will turn towards Egypt in the coming weeks."

The Return rallies culminate on May 15, the day Palestinians commemorate Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe) when hundreds of thousands fled or were driven out of their homes in 1948 and Israel was created.

Haaretz said the Israeli army is using live fire because it fears a massive breach of the aging Gaza fence.

The report further referred to concerns by the Israeli army sources that in case of many Palestinian casualties, the international community might renew diplomatic pressure on the regime.

On Saturday, the European Union questioned Israel's "use of force" against the Gazans, calling for "restraint" in the besieged enclave.

In a statement, Maja Kocijancic, the EU spokeswoman for foreign affairs and security policy, referred to the killing of nine Palestinians, including a minor and a journalist, in Gaza on Friday and the injuring of hundreds more by Israeli forces.

The carnage "raises serious questions about the proportionate use of force which must be addressed," read the statement.

"The EU is deeply saddened by the further loss of life. We wish a speedy recovery to all those injured. All concerned need to enable the quick delivery of medical equipment to those who need it, and allow medical deferrals to hospitals outside Gaza for humanitarian reasons," it added.

On March 31, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini urged "an independent and transparent investigation" into the use of live ammunition by the Israeli military against the Gazans.

(Source: agencies)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	96341.3
IFX	1085.75

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	55,700 rials
EUR	65,750 rials
GBP	78,500 rials
AED	14,850 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	62.02/b
Brent	67.11/b
OPEC Basket	65.18/b
Gold	\$1,333.95/oz
Silver	\$16.41/oz
Platinum	\$920.85/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Railway fleet to receive 90 passenger wagons in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN**— Some 90 passenger wagons will be added to the Iranian railway fleet in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), according to a railway official.

Mir-Hassan Mousavi, the deputy managing director of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, put the current number of passenger wagons at 1,308 with the average life of 25 years, IRIB news reported on Sunday.



98% of cities to enjoy national gas network by next March

**ENERGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** – National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)'s deputy director for planning affairs said some 1,120 cities across Iran are already joined to the country's national gas network and by the yearend the number will reach 1,162 that is 98 percent of the country's cities.

According to Gholam Reza Mashayekhi, of the 53,000 villages in the country, 45,000 have the potential to join the national gas network. Currently about 24,000 villages, that is 78 percent of the country's total number of villages are connected to the national network.



New round of offering state-run shares to start

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** —Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) will hold its first auction in the new Iranian calendar year (started March 21) to divest shares of 12 governmental companies and firms to the private sector on April 17, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Jafar Sobhani, the advisor to the IPO head, the value of the offered shares stands at 65 trillion rials (about \$1.32 billion).

"This is to be the biggest auction ever in industrial, carpet, and livestock sectors," he added.



Zarif to attend Iran-Brazil business forum

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who began his visits to several African and South American countries at the head of a politico-economic delegation on Sunday, will attend Iran-Brazil business forum on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

According to Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi, Zarif will travel to Senegal, Namibia, Brazil, and Uruguay to meet with political, economic and parliamentary officials of these countries.

The spokesman said tens of businesspeople and entrepreneurs from the governmental and private companies active in various sectors are accompanying Zarif in these trips.



\$1.5b of new mining projects to be inaugurated in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mehdi Karbasian announced that \$1.5 billion of new mining and related industries projects will be inaugurated by the current Iranian yearend (March 20, 2019).

"During the previous Iranian calendar year 1396, \$4.5 billion of mining and related industries projects became operational," Mehr news agency quoted him as saying.

Foreign currency jump rears ugly head in domestic production, exports

**1 →** The Tehran Times asked the Iranain economist and President of Iran World Trade Center Mohammad Reza Sabzalipour, through an e-mail interview, to shed light on the issue.

As he described, Iranian non-oil products are categorized in three groups: industrial and manufactured goods, traditional goods including hand-woven carpets, handicrafts, and etc., and agricultural products such as pistachio, almond, saffron, and some kinds of vegetables.

Increase in foreign exchange rates will not have an equal impact on the named categories, Sabzalipour underlined.

"Foreign exchange fluctuations and any increase in forex rates, will have the highest impact on industrial and manufactured goods. The required raw materials and the utilized machineries to manufacture such products are mainly imported and foreign currency rate growth will boost their final production costs making them more expensive than imported similar products. This will, in result, push up general inflation rate, make Iranian consumers unsatisfied, and reduces Iranian products ability to compete their foreign rivals. Besides, Iranian exporters will have difficulties with marketing and selling Iranian products in international markets, exports of Iran-made products will decline, Iran's non-oil revenues will shrink, and trade balance will turn negative in favor of imports," he explained.

"In addition to the harm that forex rate augmentation will make to domestic production and industrial sector, it will also lead into unemployment of domestic workforce when Iranian producers will not be capable of selling their products neither in nor out of the country to pay their employees or clear their banking loans," he added.

However, as Sabzalipour believes, the impact of the growth in foreign exchange rate will not



President of Iran World Trade Center Mohammad Reza Sabzalipour

be so tangible on domestically produced traditional goods or agricultural products for there are less reliable on imports of raw materials from foreign countries.

"It is worth mentioning that the major part of Iran's non-oil exports goes to export of industrial and manufactured goods, which is about 80 percent of the country's total non-oil exports. Therefore, the ongoing increase in foreign exchange rate and depreciation of rial will make Iran's economy incur a huge and uncompensable loss leading it into recession, inflation, joblessness and more of banking arrears," he added.

Negative net exports expected

According to a report by ISNA, \$48.58 billion of non-oil products were supposed to be exported during the first eleventh months

of the previous Iranian year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018), while the exported value of non-oil goods in the said time reached \$41.69 billion, i.e. about \$6.89 billion less than the predicted amount. The question, here, is if the government would be able to create balance between the value of imports and that of exports, considering the ever-increasing rial depreciation.

Confirming the \$7-billion trade deficit, Sabzalipour referred to the latest data announced by Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mojtaba Khosrotaj in a televised interview on April 5. "Based on the recent data published by Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran's non-oil foreign trade stood at \$101 billion in 1396, including \$54 billion of imports and

\$47 billion of exports," he quoted Khosrotaj as saying.

Thus, trade balance in 1396, despite the published official data showing economic growth and the achievements of implementation of the Joint Comprehension Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been negative, Iran WTC President concluded.

The official noted that the \$7-billion trade deficit does not embrace the value of smuggled goods into the country, which, as estimated by official data, is about \$15 billion to \$20 billion annually. "Iran, in fact, imports \$70 billion to \$75 billion of non-oil goods not \$54 billion, therefore, the trade deficit is more than \$20 billion not the estimated \$7 billion," Sabzalipour said.

As he suggested, to reach a positive trade balance, the government needs to prepare a proper budget plan and earn all the predicted income in it. It should also facilitate exports of non-oil goods to gain the forecasted non-oil revenues by exporting manufactured and industrial products as well as services. The government is also recommended to advance its economic cooperation with foreign countries, in specific Industrial Westerners and to remove all unreasonable barriers on the way of quality foreign products, he added.

To cut the long story short, increasing foreign exchange rates cannot improve exports per se in the long-run although it can increase traders' income temporarily. Any growth in foreign currency rates will push up the costs of supplying raw materials and importing goods. Exporters, thus, do not prefer a sudden upsurge but an incremental increase of foreign currency rate, which is in clear correlation with domestic and foreign inflation rates and brings them a rather stable economic situation besides a predictable future.

India, Iran, Russia resume talks on activating key trade corridor



India, Iran and Russia have resumed talks on activating the International North South Transport Corridor which will cut freight time to Europe by half and bring down the cost for the benefit of east and southeast Asian exporters.

India, Iran and Russia are leading in activating the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) route since 2000, through existing road-route and with the development of some railway gaps in between the 7,200-km long multi-mode network of ship, rail and road.

The INSTC was discussed during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to India in February while Russia maintains a strong interest in the trade route, said Ambassador P S Raghavan, Convener of National Security Advisory Board in the Indian government.

"It is not only to make Indian-Russian trade or Indian-European trade profitable, actually it will make it very lucrative for east Asia and southeast Asia exporters. There is nothing to stop the INSTC from being activated in a matter of months," said Raghavan. He said that capacity building can be carried

out as trade volume increases and progress is made on related issues.

The potential is enormous and well known, Raghavan said.

With no trade sanctions against Iran, the INSTC becomes "very competitive", he said.

Raghavan said the INSTC cuts transportation time and cost by half as compared to the Suez Canal route.

The current shipment through Suez Canal route involves a longer distance, and is expensive as well as congested.

As U.S. and China trade tariff barbs, others scoop up U.S. soybeans

Escalating tensions between the United States and China have triggered a flurry of U.S. soybean purchases by European buyers, in one of the first signs that trade tariff threats lobbed between the world's top two economies are disrupting global commodity trade flows.

News of the sales, confirmed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday, helped to underpin benchmark Chicago Board of Trade soybean prices <0#S:> after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to slap tariffs on an additional \$100 billion of Chinese goods.

The USDA said 458,000 tonnes of U.S. soybeans were sold to undisclosed destinations, which traders and grains analysts said included EU soybean processors such as the Netherlands and Germany.

If the entire volume is confirmed to be going to the European

Union, it would be the largest one-off sale to the bloc in more than 15 years, according to USDA data. The USDA could not immediately be reached for comment.

"We're seeing a realignment of trade," largely because the politics is driving up Brazilian soybean prices, said Jack Scoville, analyst with the Price Futures Group.

Traders and analysts said the unusual trade flows were likely to continue in the near term, benefiting U.S. Gulf Coast shippers and likely hurting exporters in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, the No. 2 bulk grain outlet that relies heavily on Chinese demand.

Trade tensions between Washington and Beijing have rattled markets over the past week. Soybean prices tumbled by as much as 5 percent after China threatened to levy extra duties on U.S. shipments, though the market ultimately ended the week down about 1 percent.

The United States is the second-largest soybean exporter in the world after Brazil. China is by far the top buyer, importing about two-thirds of all soybeans traded globally.

The big U.S. soybean sales came at a time when U.S. shipments are traditionally costlier than newly harvested soybeans shipped from Brazil, the world's biggest exporter.

But accelerated buying of Brazilian beans by Chinese importers, weary of potentially paying steep tariffs on U.S. purchases, has sent Brazilian export premiums to historic highs.

Near-term soybean shipments from Brazil peaked near 200 cents above CBOT May soybean futures SK8 before pulling back to around 170 cents over by the end of the week, traders said. U.S. Gulf Coast shipments, by comparison, were only around 90 cents a bushel above futures.

(Source: Reuters)

Khalkhal Dasht's response to a Tehran Times report: "Bitter experience of Chinese investor with Iranian contractor"

Following a report on a conflict between the Chinese oil company Sinopec and an Iranian International company called Khalkhal Dasht which was published on March 19 by Tehran Times, Khalkhal Dasht has responded to the mentioned report, what comes below is the Iranian company's account of the events.

The addendum

According to the response received by Tehran Times, Khalkhal Dasht company stated that Sinopec Corporation did not consider or acknowledge an addendum, agreed by both sides on 02.16.1394 (May 6, 2015), in their claims against the Iranian company. Khalkhal Dasht believed that what was accounted by the Chinese company as the truth had been false claims.

Khalkhal Dasht stated that the company has legal evidence to prove that Sinopec's claims had been wrong and in case of necessity Khalkhal Dasht is willing to present legal documents as they had before in court.

According to Khalkhal Dasht, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) did award the first phase of Yadavaran oilfield develop-

ment project to Sinopec in 2007 and, in 2011 the Chinese company signed the mentioned two engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning (EPCC) deals, worth \$200 million with the Iranian-based international company, but afterwards the Chinese company changed the contract provisions based on some new requirements in the project which consequently raised the contract's value to \$300 million (according to Khalkhal Dasht the new terms were covered in the May 6, addendum).

As stated by Khalkhal Dasht, the company finished the project based on the May 6, 2015 addendum and without the execution of articles 46 and 48 in the contract's general terms, and the project was taken over by Sinopec on schedule.

After the final "take over", based on the changes in the main contract and considering the May 6, 2015 addendum along with an Article 5 of a complementary addendum dated to 24.5.1394 (August 15, 2015), Sinopec was obliged to pay Khalkhal Dasht for the additional work done on the project and

also release the Iranian company's financial guarantees. However, as Khalkhal Dasht claimed, the Chinese company did not conform to the terms of the addendum and refused to pay the fees or release Khalkhal Dasht's guarantees.

Khalkhal Dasht then filed a law suit against Sinopec and an 8-member group of experts specialized in oil industry from Iran's court of justice approved the final take over and also the additional work that was done on the project. Based on the expert-group's report the court sentenced Sinopec to a payment of \$100 million in compensation for the additional works done beside the contractual obligations.

Khalkhal Dasht further stated that despite court orders to release the company's guarantees, Sinopec has illegally blocked \$47 million worth of Khalkhal Dasht's financial guarantees and refused to pay over \$120 million of their debts.

The Iranian company believes that Sinopec's lawyer wasn't able to persuade the Iranian court of justice with their presented

evidence, since all the Chinese company's claims had been raised without acknowledging the addendums which were approved by both sides.

Regarding the international arbitration term in the contracts, Khalkhal Dasht explained that the item was excluded from the contracts based on a definitive judicial verdict, and based on the article 6 of the May 6, 2015 addendum any conflict or disagreements should have been settled in Iranian judiciary system and not any other third party could get involved.

Khalkhal Dasht finally explained that when a foreign company (in this case Sinopec) registers a representative office in Iran, under the Companies Registration Act approved on 02.10.1310 (December 24, 1931) by the country's judiciary system, the new office will be considered and treated as an Iranian company confronting the country's laws.

*What came above was all and only Khalkhal Dasht's account of the events and Tehran Times does not approve nor reject the raised claims.*



# Middle East emerges as possible energy winner in U.S.-China spat

The Middle East is emerging as a potential beneficiary of the brewing trade war between the U.S. and China as the Asian nation strikes back with retaliatory tariffs on American petrochemical products.

If China goes ahead with its proposal to slap a 25 percent tariff on polyethylene and liquid propane, which were among 106 American goods targeted, buyers in the Asian nation may look elsewhere for alternatives to pricier U.S. supplies. And the energy-rich Middle East with plenty of petrochemical supplies looks well-suited to meet the substitution requirements.

The region is already China's biggest source for polyethylene -- one of the most commonly used plastics in the world -- and can further boost exports to the country along with another major seller South Korea, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc. China may need to replace 2.3 million metric tons of PE next year if the tariffs are implemented, the bank said.



China imports 12.7 million tons of the product a year, of which the U.S. currently accounts for only 600,000 tons, Goldman estimates. But purchases from the U.S. have the potential to grow more than threefold over the next two years if the tariffs aren't implemented, it said.

As for propane, China is the third-biggest export market for the U.S. and has boosted purchases from there in recent years. Although the tariffs won't hurt America as much as intended, the most likely alternative option is the Middle East as more supplies come on stream there, according to industry consultant Energy Aspects Ltd.

In particular, Iran stands out as a likely beneficiary as the Persian Gulf nation can sell the gas at a discount to regional contract prices, said FGE consultant Ong Han Wee. "Iran is an attractive alternative," he said. "Chinese companies will have to diversify their supply sources more toward Iran."

(Source: Bloomberg)

## LNG to drive record \$230b in Australia's energy exports

Australia will reach a record \$230 billion in energy exports this financial year driven by an LNG and oil boom.

The March 2018 edition of the federal government's Resources and Energy Quarterly forecasts a buoyant export market that will hit more than \$230 billion this year and the next, before slipping below \$230 billion from 2019 until 2022, when it will rise to about \$240 billion in export value.

Mining and energy exports are forecast to generate about \$1 trillion for the national economy during this period.

LNG will become Australia's biggest resources export by 2022, generating \$39 billion, up from the \$30 billion this year, "driven by higher export volumes and, to a lesser extent, higher prices," the report stated.

"Gas is expected to record the strongest growth of the fossil fuels, assisted by low prices, growing supply and its role in reducing air pollution and carbon emissions.

"Gas use in power generation -- the largest gas-consuming sector -- is also expected to rise, but demand growth will be constrained due to competition from renewables and coal."

Around 70 percent of all gas produced in Australia is likely to be exported.

The latest data from Bloomberg New Energy Finance predicts that in 2018 demand will reach 300 million tons.

Thermal coal is believed to have reached a high watermark this year as it hits \$22 billion, with forecasts predicting a

continued downward trend over the next five years, generating \$17 billion in 2022-23.

However, it is not entirely bleak for coal.

"Going forward, strong growth in demand in emerging Asia will largely offset softer demand in the OECD," the report said.

Metallurgical, or coking, coal will track roughly a similar trajectory, peaking this financial year at \$39.9 billion before it begins to slide down in value, hitting \$33 billion by 2022-23.

On the metals front, iron ore is forecast to decline significantly from \$65 billion to \$55 billion, as the price slips to \$55 a ton by the end of this year.

The government report highlights the need for renewed growth in exploration and investment as the mining boom comes to an end.

"By the turn of this decade, the investment cycle, which ramped up in the late 2000s and peaked in 2012 will have bottomed out, and the heightened production that investment gave rise to will have levelled off," the report said.

"This effectively marks the end of the mining boom. The legacy of the boom will continue to be reflected for many years to come in high production and export volumes, but future sources of growth will require new exploration and investment activity."



At the end of last month, the Turnbull government called a snap review of Australia's mining industry - the first in nearly three decades - in a bid to find new reserves, attract more investment and end bitter political debate over the future of the lucrative resources sector.

In a major speech defending coal as a "great and beautiful industry," Resources Minister Matthew Canavan declared the "mining boom is not over" and call for big business to go beyond "high profile campaigns on tax policy" and publicly back the resources sector.

(Source: smh.com.au)

## Russian firms to invest \$22.5b in oil production in 2018

Russian companies are expected to invest \$22.5 billion (1.3 trillion rubles) in oil production this year, with crude output and exports forecast at the same levels as in 2017, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Friday.

Russia's vertically integrated oil companies invested \$23 billion (1.33 trillion rubles) in oil production in 2017, up by 10 percent compared to the 2016 investments of \$21 billion (1.21 trillion rubles), Novak said, as quoted by the TASS news agency.

"Last year we had a very large increase of 10 percent, so maintaining this level would be a good figure," Novak noted.

Despite the OPEC/non-OPEC deal, Russia's average daily crude oil production inched up again last year, to a 30-year-high of 10.98 million bpd. Russia's pledge in the production cut deal is to shave off 300,000 bpd from the October 2016 level, which was the country's highest monthly production in almost 30 years -- 11.247 million bpd.

Commenting on the deal in which Russia leads the non-OPEC producers' part of the pact, Novak said today that all countries in the agreement are in favor of continuing some form of cooperation to bring the oil market back to balance.

"I did not hear from a single minister who was against such cooperation," TASS quoted Novak as saying.

However, the Russian energy ministry has not received proposals to extend the current OPEC/non-OPEC deal in its existing form through the end of the first half of 2019, Novak noted.

Referring to OPEC and allies' plans for after the current expiry date of the cuts at the end of 2018, Novak said that some kind of cooperation could be made "indefinite". "If we talk about the format, we can make an indefinite agreement," Novak said.

Last month, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that Saudi Arabia and Russia were looking to solidify their cooperation on crude oil production for another decade or two.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Egypt to be self-sufficient with natural gas by end of 2018: minister

Egypt's Petroleum Minister Tariq al-Mulla said that Egypt is exerting efforts to achieve self-sufficiency with natural gas by the end of this year, to stop importing liquefied gas.

Mulla said that Egypt has many opportunities that will support growth in gas production in the near and medium future.

He pointed to the development projects of gas fields, especially in the Mediterranean Sea, that are under way or planned for work in the near future. They include 16 projects with total investments estimated at over \$25 billion as well as projects that will be on production successively over the next four years.

Mulla said in a statement that over the past four years, the petroleum sector has succeeded in implementing 24 projects with a total investments worth \$16.2 billion, with a daily production of about 4.1 billion cubic feet of gas and about 36 thousand barrels of condensates.

(Source: egyptindependent.com)

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Will we stop Trump before it's too late?



ARTICLE

By Madeleine Albright

On April 28, 1945 — 73 years ago — Italians hung the corpse of their former dictator Benito Mussolini upside down next to a gas station in Milan. Two days later, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker beneath the streets of war-ravaged Berlin. Fascism, it appeared, was dead.

To guard against a recurrence, the survivors of war and the Holocaust joined forces to create the United Nations, forge global financial institutions and — through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — strengthen the rule of law. In 1989, the Berlin Wall came down and the honor roll of elected governments swelled not only in Central Europe, but also Latin America, Africa and Asia. Almost everywhere, it seemed, dictators were out and democrats were in. Freedom was ascendant.

Today, we are in a new era, testing whether the democratic banner can remain aloft amid terrorism, sectarian conflicts, vulnerable borders, rogue social media and the cynical schemes of ambitious men. The answer is not self-evident. We may be encouraged that most people in most countries still want to live freely and in peace, but there is no ignoring the storm clouds that have gathered. In fact, fascism — and the tendencies that lead toward fascism — pose a more serious threat now than at any time since the end of World War II.

Warning signs include the relentless grab for more authority by governing parties in Hungary, the Philippines, Poland and Turkey — all United States allies. The raw anger that feeds fascism is evident across the Atlantic in the growth of nativist movements opposed to the idea of a united Europe, including in Germany, where the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland has emerged as the principal opposition party. The danger of despotism is on display in the Russia of Vladimir Putin — invader of Ukraine, meddler in foreign democracies, accused political assassin, brazen liar and proud son of the KGB Putin has just been re-elected to a new six-year term, while in Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, a is poised to triumph in balloting next month. In China, Xi Jinping has persuaded a docile National People's Congress to lift the constitutional limit on his tenure in power.

Political opponents

Around the Mediterranean, the once bright promise of the Arab Spring has been betrayed by autocratic leaders, such as Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt (also just re-elected), who use security to justify the jailing of reporters and political opponents. Thanks to allies in Moscow and Tehran, the Bashar al-Assad retains his stranglehold over much of Syria. In Africa, the presidents who serve longest are often the most corrupt, multiplying the harm they inflict with each passing year. Meanwhile, the possibility that fascism will be accorded a fresh chance to strut around the world stage is enhanced by the volatile presidency of Donald Trump.

Will Mitch McConnell read this? Paul Ryan? Sean Hannity? The people who understand Albright's position are already doing all the things she ... thank you for these words of encouragement - and for going on record that Trump, aside from being a bully and demagogue domestically, is ...

If freedom is to prevail over the many challenges to it, American leadership is urgently required. This was among the indelible lessons of the 20th century. But by what he has said, done and failed to do, Mr. Trump has steadily diminished America's positive clout in global councils.

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Instead of mobilizing international coalitions to take on world problems, he touts the doctrine of "every nation for itself" and has led America into isolated positions on trade, climate change and Middle East peace. Instead of engaging in creative diplomacy, he has insulted United States neighbors and allies, walked away from key international agreements, mocked multilateral organizations and stripped the State Department of its resources and role. Instead of standing up for the values of a free society, his oft-vented scorn for democracy's building blocks has strengthened the hands of dictators. No longer need they fear United States criticism regarding human rights or civil liberties. On the contrary, they can and do point to Trump's own words to justify their repressive actions.

At one time or another, Trump has attacked the judiciary, ridiculed the media, defended torture, condoned police brutality, urged supporters to rough up hecklers and — jokingly or not — equated mere policy disagreements with treason. He tried to undermine faith in America's electoral process through a bogus advisory commission on voter integrity. He routinely vilifies federal law enforcement institutions. He libels immigrants and the countries from which they come. His words are so often at odds with the truth that they can appear ignorant, yet are in fact calculated to exacerbate religious, social and racial divisions. Overseas, rather than stand up to bullies, Mr. Trump appears to like bullies, and they are delighted to have him represent the American brand. If one were to draft a script chronicling fascism's resurrection, the abdication of America's moral leadership would make a credible first scene.

Equally alarming is the chance that Mr. Trump will set in motion events that neither he nor anyone else can control. His policy toward North Korea changes by the day and might quickly return to saber-rattling should Pyongyang prove stubborn before or during talks. His threat to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement could unravel a pact that has made the world safer and could undermine America's reputation for trustworthiness at a critical moment. His support of protectionist tariffs invites retaliation from major trading partners — creating unnecessary conflicts and putting at risk millions of export-dependent jobs. The recent purge of his national security team raises new questions about the quality of advice he will receive.

Enemy of American people

John Bolton starts work in the White House on Monday. What is to be done? First, defend the truth. A free press, for example, is not the enemy of the American people; it is the protector of the American people. Second, we must reinforce the principle that no one, not even the president, is above the law. Third, we should each do our part to energize the democratic process by registering new voters, listening respectfully to those with whom we disagree, knocking on doors for favored candidates, and ignoring the cynical counsel: "There's nothing to be done."

I'm 80 years old, but I can still be inspired when I see young people coming together to demand the right to study without having to wear a flak jacket. We should also reflect on the definition of greatness. Can a nation merit that label by aligning itself with dictators and autocrats, ignoring human rights, declaring open season on the environment, and disdaining the use of diplomacy at a time when virtually every serious problem requires international cooperation? (Source: The NYT)

Mexico's presidential election could leave the country in economic limbo

By John Lloyd

When Felipe Calderon handed the presidential sash to Enrique Peña Nieto on December 1, 2012, Mexico's economy was just pulling out of a four-year slump. The oil sector, which covered roughly a third of the federal budget, was in decline, production down nearly 1 million barrels a day and falling fast. Monopolies and oligopolies made everyday transactions cost up to 40 percent more than if markets were more open.

Mexico's infrastructure lagged its emerging market peers; its students languished at the bottom of developed-country rankings. And more than half of its workers toiled off the books, with few benefits or legal protections.

As Peña Nieto gets ready to hand the sash to another, growth has returned — averaging a respectable if underwhelming 2.4 percent a year. Foreign direct investment is also back, with tens of billions of dollars pouring into autos, telecommunications, and energy. But for Mexico to really change, the ambitious reform project of the last five years needs to deepen. And the government's other failures have undermined the very model that can brighten Mexico's economic future, making any such deepening much less likely.

Donald Trump and Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto shake hands at a press conference in Mexico City, Mexico on August 31, 2016. Despite frosty relations between the two, Mexico has granted the Trump Organization a series of trademarks.

Long-standing barriers

Peña Nieto took on Mexico's long-standing structural barriers to growth through the Pacto por Mexico forged by its three biggest political parties, passing nearly a dozen reforms in his first 18 months to enhance competition, extend credit, revive the energy sector, expand the tax base, and better train young Mexicans.

This ambitious project led to real wins. Mobile calls now cost less than half what they used to, and mobile broadband access has become more a norm than a luxury, subscriptions up eightfold as regulators weakened telecom mogul Carlos Slim's grip on the market. New pipelines and processing plants have eased the gas shortages formerly facing Mexico's industrial heartland. And several million workers have emerged from the labor shadows, their firms pushed by financial incentives, temporarily lower payroll taxes and stronger enforcement to register with the government. Millions of Mexicans have opened their first bank accounts or received their first credit cards; banks now offer more mortgages, credit lines, and lending than in the past.

Yet these gains represent only a small part of what the reforms can do for Mexico. The real payoffs for consumers, companies,



Peña Nieto took on Mexico's long-standing structural barriers to growth through the Pacto por Mexico forged by its three biggest political parties, passing nearly a dozen reforms in his first 18 months to enhance competition, extend credit, revive the energy sector, expand the tax base, and better train young Mexicans.

and the economy will only happen down the road. It will take years for the \$100 billion of foreign investment in the energy sector, for instance, to stanch the long slide in production with new finds and fields, and for the transformation of the electricity grid to increase production, lower prices, and boost clean energy.

Challenges to dominant economic players and powers are just beginning: The new and fiercely independent antitrust agency COFECE has launched dozens of investigations into shipping, sugar, pharmaceuticals, airport taxis and pension managers, but the lower prices, competition, and innovation from this opening are yet to come.

Changes in the classroom have barely started. A new curriculum that moves from rote memorization to critical thinking and social and emotional learning will be rolled out only this August, with the benefits accruing to the next generation of Mexican learners.

Unfortunately, however, the country's patience has worn thin. The government over-promised quick gains — GDP growth of 6 percent and drastic declines in poverty

— leaving many Mexicans disillusioned.

Mexico's geographic economic chasms continue to deepen, the fast-paced productivity and Asian rates of economic growth in the NAFTA-linked north leaving behind the stagnating southern states. There, tens of millions of Mexicans — some 40 percent of the population — still face entrenched poverty, as good jobs remain few, and crime and migration combine to tear apart communities.

Public trust eroded

Fiscal mismanagement and greed have further eroded public trust. Overspending every year by tens of billions of dollars, the Peña Nieto administration will leave Mexico vastly more indebted than when it started, with debt rising from a third to nearly 50 percent of GDP. And his government spent poorly: Public investment has plummeted to its lowest relative levels since the 1940s, as almost all of this new largesse has gone to salaries and benefits or disappeared into private hands.

This administration's profligacy and over-the-top corruption have cast a long shadow over the general economic consen-

sus of the last 30 years. True, the second and third top candidates in the polls — respectively, Ricardo Anaya of the Frente alliance and Jose Antonio Meade of Peña's PRI — promise to continue market-friendly policies, even in the face of a debt-constrained budget and battered credibility. Yet that could not be said of the populist who leads the polls, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Champions of civil society, transparency, and strong independent public institutions can derive little comfort from some of his recent pronouncements. On the stump, he offers a return to a time of business subsidies, state ownership, and agricultural self-sufficiency. He repeatedly questions energy and infrastructure contracts — including those undergirding Mexico City's new \$13 billion airport — and promises to roll back the educational shifts underway.

If that happens, the as-yet-unrealized promise of faster and more inclusive growth, and of a more competitive and prosperous Mexico, could recede yet further into the future.

(Source: Newsweek)

Why can't Trump find legal help?

By Paul F. Campos

In what is becoming one of the most remarkable chapters in American legal history, the president of the United States is in serious need of top-notch legal help, but apparently cannot find top-notch lawyers to represent him.

As Robert Mueller's Russia probe moves forward, the Trump administration has approached a slew of prominent law firms and attorneys, only to be told that while, in the words of Dan Webb and Tom Buchanan of Winston & Strawn, the "opportunity to represent the president (is) the highest honor" that can come a lawyer's way, they must respectfully decline that honor. This left the president relying on a legal team who, with the exception of former Hogan Lovells lawyer Ty Cobb, features no criminal defense lawyers, let alone attorneys with experience in the sort of investigation Mr. Mueller is conducting.

The reasons top firms and lawyers are giving for refusing to work for Trump include conflicts of interests with current clients, the possibility of alienating sources of future business, the president's reluctance to follow legal advice, his tendency to ask lawyers to engage in what Ted Bontros of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher referred to delicately as "questionable activities," and his history of not paying his bills.

Although these reasons for not taking on the president as a client are plausible, it seems something more profound is at work. After all, given the nature of white-collar criminal defense work, all these firms have extensive experience dealing with complicated conflicts issues, as well as difficult, controversial and otherwise unsavory clients. (By contrast, Bill Clinton secured the services of Bob Bennett, arguably the nation's top white-collar criminal defense attorney, to defend him in the context of Ken Starr's independent counsel investigation.)

Tense antipathy toward Trump

Is there something else about Mr. Trump that makes elite lawyers especially reluctant to represent him? It is true that he presented himself as an anti-establishment populist and that more highly educated voters in general were less likely to vote for him. Yet campaign contributions to presidential candidates from lawyers at America's top law firms suggest strongly that the antipathy toward Trump among elite lawyers is especially intense. I examined federal records of presidential cam-



aign contributions in 2012 and 2016 at the nation's 10 highest-ranked law firms and other elite institutions known for their political and economic influence, such as Goldman Sachs. The results were striking.

In 2012, employees at these companies made 3,552 contributions to presidential campaigns. Barack Obama received 58.6 percent of these contributions while 40.6 percent went to Mitt Romney (the remainder going to other candidates in the Republican primary). Mr. Romney's percentage of contributions was very similar to the percentage of the vote — 42 percent — he received in the election from voters with any postgraduate education.

The same data for the 2016 election provide a stark contrast. Of the 4,812 contributions originating from these companies, Mr. Trump received a total of 40. Meanwhile, contributions to Hillary Clinton outnumbered those to Mr. Trump by a ratio of more than 100 to 1.

Mrs. Clinton received nearly twice as many contributions from lawyers in these companies than Mr.

Obama received four years earlier. (The latter fact is all the more striking, given that Mrs. Clinton raised 22 percent less money from the electorate as a whole than Mr. Obama raised in 2012.)

Meanwhile, compared with the support they gave to Mr. Romney, contributions from lawyers at these elite firms to Mr. Trump declined by a remarkable 98 percent. (Overall, Mr. Trump raised 26 percent less money than Mr. Romney raised in 2012.)

Some of the reluctance to contribute to the Trump campaign may be explained by the belief that he was unlikely to win. Yet the shift in support among elite lawyers between the Democratic and Republican nominees in 2012 and 2016 is extraordinary.

Data from Kirkland & Ellis, a Top 10 firm with a reputation for leaning Republican, highlight how extreme that shift was. In 2012, Kirkland & Ellis's lawyers made 20.6 percent more contributions to Mr. Romney's campaign than they made to Mr. Obama's. In 2016, the same firm's lawyers were 34 times more likely to contribute to Mrs. Clinton's campaign than to Mr. Trump's.

Lack of support for Trump

The notable lack of support for Mr. Trump inside top law firms reflects a broader pattern among elite institutions. For example, at the investment bank Goldman Sachs, contributions to the Trump campaign were 99 percent lower than those to Mr. Romney's campaign four years earlier. Indeed, the total number of Goldman Sachs executives who to date have taken senior positions in the Trump administration (five) is greater than the total number of the firm's approximately 34,000 employees who contributed to Trump's campaign (three).

The revealed preferences, in the form of 2016 campaign contributions, of these elite professionals suggest that Mr. Trump's inability to hire top lawyers to help him with his mounting legal troubles is not merely because he has various hallmarks of a troublesome client. Rather, they suggest the depth of the misgivings Mr. Trump has raised among American elites, and which persist today.

Of course, those misgivings do not appear to extend to one particularly crucial elite: the leadership of the Republican Party. Whether that changes because of the outcome of the Mueller investigation, and in particular because of whatever role the refusal of so many elite lawyers to represent the president plays in that outcome, remains to be seen.

(Source: The NYT)



# Prof. Zonis: Trump’s tariff policy global effect to be less than expected

➔ How much will this decision to increase tariffs affect countries like China, Japan and South Korea then?

A: South Korea has just agreed to lower tariffs on U.S. products, for example, on U.S. manufactured cars.

In that sense, Trump’s “trade war” is receiving positive results from another country. The big issue is China. It is important to keep in mind that in China has been playing unfairly on so-called “free” trade for years — providing various hidden subsidies for their domestic producers, e.g. electricity costs, shipping costs, low cost credit, et, etc., while simultaneously excluding American made products from the China market all the while stealing technology. U.S. leaders figured that as long as those practices and concomitant high levels of economic growth were driving China towards a more liberal type of democracy, it was a price the U.S. was willing to pay. Now, under President Xi, it is clear the dream of a liberal China is over. It is time to stop allowing China’s trade war against the U.S. to go unanswered.



How likely will the European Union retaliate by imposing tariffs on the U.S. products?

A: Only very delicately.

Will Trump’s acts result in a trade war

between the U.S. and world’s other economic powers? What can be the consequences of such a possible war for world?

A: I think there will less here than meets the eye — negotiations will be held,

exceptions will be granted, things will calm down.

After world war, the cooperation between the U.S. and Europe was based on trade, security and military regimes like NATO. Don’t you think possible trade war between the U.S. and Europe can spill over other security and military fields, too?

A: I think the dangers from President Trump’s likely cancellation if the Iran nuclear deal is a far greater challenge since the major U.S. allies plus Russia and China all support the deal.

Rising of rightist in Europe is a threat to the future of the EU and from the other side this can result in more independent trade relation without the EU considerations. Considering this fact how do you see the future of EU?

A: The EU faces staggering challenges, most recently from the results of the Italian election, not to mention Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. But there is just massive support for the EU among European elites and they will manage to keep it stumbling along.

## Trump expects Turkey to side U.S. aggressive policy toward Iran



➔ Third, he will want to maintain American presence in Syria for Israel’s sake. Fourth, Trump’s ultimate agenda is confronting Iran in the region and for this reason he may feel he would need logistical facilities in Syria. And finally, for all the inter-connected reasons above, he will continue to support and feed PYD/YPG.

In a fundamental sense, what Trump does in Syria would be best understood in terms of what he intends to do regarding Iran.

This is a critical question. Trump will by 12 May have made his decision on the nuclear agreement with Iran. He said he will leave the agreement if his demands for changes in it have not been met by that time and recommend to the Congress the imposition of new sanctions.

With the likes of Bolton and Pompeo in the line-up, Trump is likely to pursue an increasingly more aggressive approach to Iran.

And he will want to see Turkey on his side as a NATO ally and expect access to Turkish facilities in case of a military operation. So Turkey has to make a choice to side or not to side with America in Trump’s Iranian offensive.

The choice for Turkey should be clear. Let’s remember that Ankara pursued a policy of proactive neutrality during the 1980-1988 Iranian-Iraqi war. Turkey not only did not take sides in the conflict, but worked actively with both sides to end it. U.S. is a friend and an ally, but Iran is a friend and a neighbor. Furthermore, Turkey supports the Iranian nuclear agreement. Hence, Turkey must work other signatory countries that still support the agreement to dissuade the U.S. unilaterally from abandoning it.

However, at the end of the day Turkey must make clear that it will not be a part of or accessory to any hostile action by the U.S. against Iran. The U.S. will one day leave, but Iran will continue to be our valued neighbor.»

## A contemplation on the U.S.-China Trade War

➔ The fact is that the effects of Trump’s unilateral protectionist plans on the trade process between the two countries of U.S. and China can’t be denied. Accordingly, the United States will suffer losses in its exports due to the Chinese counteraction.

In recent years, and on average, the value of U.S.-China trade exchanges has been over \$ 600 billion a year. This is while imposing restrictions on imports based on protectionist economic policies will surely reduce this level. However, the President of the United States claims that it is necessary to enforce such policies, in any possible way, against the two main economic partners of Washington, namely China and the European Union.

Many economic analysts believe that although these policies can be temporarily effective in boosting the U.S. economy, they’ll be destructive in the long run since there’s going to be counteractions by the other sides. It’s not without a reason that many analysts and experts have warned Trump on his economic policies including the restrictive tariffs imposed against China and the European Union.

The second point is that the economic conflict between China and the United States has directly challenged the rules of free trade in the international system. Many economic

theorists argue that in the time of globalization, the application of any discriminations and restrictions in which is to affect free trade will lead to a fragmentation in the structure of the international economy.

Trump has now challenged free-trade rules through applying his protectionist economic policies. China’s recent objection of the United States to the World Trade Organization can also be analyzed in the same vein.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce has emphasized that, given the U.S.’s refusal to negotiate with China on compensation for tariff imposition on its goods in accordance with WTO rules, China will have to begin the dispute settlement process in the Organization to defend its rights and its legitimate interests.

The Chinese authorities rightly argue that the restrictive measures taken by Trump’s government against Beijing are in contrast with the principles of the free trade system. However, given his specific political and economic approach, Trump seems to be prepared to stand up against the World Trade Organization. This is while putting specific penalties and limitations by the WTO against the United States will naturally affect the U.S. economy.

Third, the structural impacts of the U.S.-China trade

conflict is not limited to the time of Trump’s presence at the White House. Even if the next U.S. government decides to cancel the trade and import restrictions imposed by Trump’s administration, the normalization of business relations between Washington and Beijing will take a long time.

On the other hand, the effects of this economic confusion (which will last at least until 2020), will lead to a deformation of the free trade structure in the international arena. In such a situation, the redefinition of the international economy based on «free trade» is going to be extremely difficult. It should not be forgotten that the Chinese have not yet used their capacities in economic confrontation with Trump’s government.

China holds about \$ 1 trillion of U.S. debt. On the other hand, the Chinese have always been the biggest winners and buyers of the Treasury auctions until 2016. This has led some U.S. economists to warn against the consequences of economic confrontation with Beijing. They argue that Washington and Beijing’s conflict won’t be limited to the «export-import» field, but will be extended to other areas.

Beijing can use the U.S. foreign debt in its economic dispute with Trump’s administration. Hence, Washington’s economic plans against Beijing will ultimately result in gross economic strike on the United States itself.

### REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

First Announcement

نویس اول

درخواست ابراز علاقمندی

Islamic Republic Of Iran

Gharesoo – Zaringol Irrigation and Drainage Network Project

Project Management Unite (PMU)

Mode of Financing: Istisna’a

Financing No. IRN 00108

The Islamic Republic of Iran has received financing in the amount of Euro 92.2 million from Islamic Development Bank towards the cost of the Gharesoo – Zaringol Irrigation and Drainage Network Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing for payment to the Project Management Unite (PMU) staffs.

Golestan Regional Water Company (GRWC) as an executing agency for constitution of PMU invites the following individuals for co-operation:

(1) PMU Manager- The PMU Manager shall have at least a B.Sc. degree in engineering, in Civil or similar fields, with at least 20 years of experience in the field of similar project execution i.e, Dams, Irrigation and Drainage schemes, contract negotiation, (one person)

(2) Contract Expert/ Procurement Specialist- A bachelor degree in Engineering/ economics/ business administration, accounting degree in public procurement/ or equivalent. At least 10 years of relevant experience in procurement matters, contract management, and project/construction management

Experienced in international procurement procedures and principles -(one person)

(3) Civil Engineer/ or Irrigation and Drainage Engineer/ Geotechnical - A bachelor degree in civil engineering or irrigation-network, Geotechnical. A minimum of 8 years of experience both in design and construction site with extensive experience in irrigation and building -(one person)

(4) Secretary – A bachelor degree with a 5 years of experience is Required. (one person)

- The minimum required qualification
  - Having at least the required number of years of experience (as mentioned above for each respective position of similar experience in IDB or WB Projects.
  - Fully familiar with IDB or WB Guidelines for items 1,2 &3
  - fluent in verbal and written English and Persian language.

The envelops should be clearly marked “Request for co-operation for the Gharesoo – Zaringol Irrigation and Drainage Network project PMU”.

Thereafter, Iranian interested individual consultant having the following minimum qualification are invited to submit their documents latest by first May 2018 (13:00 PM) to the sectorial of GRWC. These documents include: Academic back ground, experience and any other information indicating they are qualified to perform the services. The applications shall be submitted in pdf format to the email address given below. indicating the title of position to be applied for.

The selection will of the competent individual will be carried out in accordance with the producer set out in the guidelines for the use of consultant under Islamic Development Bank financing May 2012

- 🚩 Golestan Regional Water Company (GRWC)
- 🚩 Address: Golestan regional water co, first Aghghalla road, Gorgan, Iran, postal code: 4913933165
- 🚩 Phone & Fax: (+98)1732627885
- 🚩 Website: gsrw.ir
- 🚩 Email: grwc.idb@gmail.com

The documents for application and further information on TOR can be obtained from, please contact Pars Peyab Consulting Engineers(Ms. Hassanzadeh) at No. 14, 6th west Andisheh (Shahid Goodarzi) Street, Shahid Beheshti Street, Tehran, Iran. from 8:00 am to 14:00 pm. Tel :+98-9122655416.

جمهوری اسلامی ایران

پروژه شبکه آبیاری و زهکشی قزو- زرین گل

واحد مدیریت پروژه (PMU)

روش تامین اعتبار - استعنا - شماره تامین مالی: IRN00108

جمهوری اسلامی ایران اعتباری به میزان 92/2 میلیون یورو جهت اجرای پروژه شبکه آبیاری و زهکشی قزو- زرین گل از بانک توسعه اسلامی دریافت نموده و در نظر دارد بخشی از مبلغ وام برای

پرداخت به کارکنان واحد مدیریت پروژه (PMU) هزینه شود:

شرکت آب منطقه‌ای گلستان به عنوان مجری پروژه برای تشکیل واحد مدیریت پروژه (PMU) از افراد ذیل دعوت به همکاری می نماید:

(1) مدیر واحد مدیریت پروژه : داشتن حداقل مدرک لیسانس مهندسی در رشته عمران یا مشابه با حد اقل 20 سال سابقه کار در اجرای پروژه‌های مشابه مثل سدسازی، شبکه آبیاری و زهکشی، مذاکرات قراردادی یا نظایر آن.(یک نفر)

(2) کارشناس قرارداد/ متخصص تدارکات: داشتن حداقل مدرک لیسانس در مهندسی/ اقتصاد/ مدیریت کسب و کار/ حسابداری/ حداقل 10 سال تجربه مشابه در تدارکات، مدیریت قرارداد، مدیریت ساخت، داشتن تجربه در روش و اصول تدارکات بین المللی. (یک نفر)

(3) مهندس عمران/ مهندس آبیاری و زهکشی/ ژئوتکنیک: داشتن حداقل مدرک لیسانس در مهندسی عمران یا آبیاری و ژئوتکنیک. حد اقل 8 سال تجربه در طراحی و ساخت با تجربه گسترده در آبیاری و ساختمان. (یک نفر)

(4) منشی: داشتن حداقل مدرک لیسانس با 5 سال تجربه مورد نیاز (یک نفر)

• حداقل شرایط مورد نیاز:

- داشتن حداقل تجربه مورد نیاز( همانطور که برای هر سمت مربوطه در بالا ذکر شد ) در پروژه های بانک توسعه اسلامی یا بانک جهانی.

- آشنایی کامل به دستورالعمل های بانک توسعه اسلامی و یا بانک جهانی در مورد آیینهای درخواست.

- تسلط به زبان انگلیسی و فارسی

- درج عبارت "درخواست همکاری برای واحد مدیریت پروژه شبکه آبیاری و زهکشی قزو- زرین گل" با ذکر عنوان سمت درخواستی روی پاکت ضروری می باشد.

لذا از مشاورین حقیقی ایرانی علاقمند که دارای حداقل شرایط فوق باشند دعوت می شود تا مدارک خود شامل سوابق تحصیلی، تجارب کاری و اطلاعات مرتبط دیگری که نشان دهنده توانایی فرد در انجام

خدمات محوله باشد را حد اکثر تا ساعت 13:00 مورخ 11 اردیبهشت 1397 تحویل دبیرخانه شرکت آب منطقه‌ای گلستان نمایند. ارسال مدارک در فرمت pdf به آدرس پست الکترونیکی ذیل الزامی می باشد.

انتخاب افراد ذیصلاح مطابق دستورالعمل بانک توسعه اسلامی برای انتخاب مشاوران ( نسخه می 2012 ) انجام خواهد شد.

🚩 شرکت آب منطقه‌ای گلستان

🚩 نشانی: گلستان، گرگان، ابتدای جاده آق قلا، شرکت آب منطقه‌ای گلستان، کد پستی: 4913933165

🚩 تلفن و نمابر: 01732627885

🚩 سایت الکترونیکی: gsrw.ir

🚩 پست الکترونیکی: grwc.idb@gmail.com

همچنین جهت دریافت اسناد و مدارک و اطلاعات بیشتر در باره شرح خدمات جهت شرکت در EOI به شرکت مهندسین مشاور پارس پیاب به نشانی تهران، خیابان شهید بهشتی، خیابان آندیشه ششم

غربی (شهید گودرزی)، شماره 14 بین ساعات 8:00 الی 14:00 مراجعه فرماییدو یا با شماره تلفن 09122655416 خاتم مهندس حسن زاده تماس حاصل نمایند.



# Making the world safe through censorship

By Dale Lowdermilk

The recent decision by YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki and Reddit founder Steve Huffman to make the world safe by removing "gun-related content" from their sites, represent a politically-driven censorship effort to remove opposing views on hot-button issues and may have unintended consequences.

These Internet video-hosting services are venturing on to a very slippery slope which could lead them unwittingly into strict content regulations by government agencies and agenda-driven bureaucrats based upon First, Second and Fourth Amendment grounds, depending upon which political party is in power.

Like Prohibition, blocking or restricting "gun-content" streaming videos will simply create an underground market for those wanting to share

dangerous information. In the wrong hands (and minds) any information can be dangerous. Efforts to keep bomb-making books such as "The Anarchist Cookbook" out of public libraries quickly spawned an underground market for the DVD/CD and text-only versions now shared digitally by tens of millions of subversives, terrorists and high school chemistry students.

"At the time of its publication, one Federal Bureau of Investigation memo described The Anarchist Cookbook as "one of the crudest, low-brow, paranoiac writing efforts ever attempted"

## Reloading techniques

How comfortable do college professors feel having the FBI acting as literary critics? Should other "how-to" books teaching reloading techniques, restoring antique weapons or how to make a firing

pin with 3-D printer also be restricted? Should chemistry information be restricted to medical and law enforcement "experts"?

How do we "unlearn" about dangerous chemical combinations such as nitric acid+glycerine, sulphur+potassium nitrate+charcoal, vinegar+baking soda+plastic bottles, water+sodium, gasoline/turpentine or acetone+glass bottles, match heads+plumbing pipe and the thousands of other lethal mixtures, all of which are readily available on E-Bay, Amazon or your local hardware store.

Let's not forget the thousands of Wikipedia pages and blogs discussing and/or describing the 9th century Chinese discovery of gunpowder, Alfred Nobel's contribution to warfare, weapons, TNT, the 1836 patent by Frenchman Sorel for galvanized pipe, the history of Dennis Papin and his 1679

invention of the pressure cooker, and Parisian chemist Jean Chancel for his 1805 magical medley of sulphur, sugar, rubber and potassium chlorate which produced the strike-anywhere match. As most country boys know, match heads are a common substitute for firecrackers and gunpowder.

In his book, "Records of the Unworldly and the Strange," Chinese author Tao Gu, describes in 950 AD, a miraculous "light-bringing slave" created when little sticks of pinewood are impregnated with sulphur. Should this ancient book, sticks of pinewood and sulphur (a primary component of gunpowder) be banned? Should YouTube and Reddit discussions of this book, and related topics, be blocked or shut down?

With health and safety as justification for halting "gun-issue" discussions, let's not forget that

the demonic NRA was founded in New York City in 1871 for the purpose of defending the rights of former slaves to own firearms. It was the NRA which battled "Jim Crow" laws and the KKK. The NRA is also singularly responsible for two very successful firearms safety programs, "Refuse to be a Victim" and for children, "Eddie Eagle."

## Historical facts

These inconvenient and historical facts can be found in David Kopel and Joseph Greenlee's "The Racist Origins of Gun Control Laws" and in most of John Lott's best-sellers.

YouTube coincidentally removed two "gun-issue" video links mentioned in Mr. Lott's books "At The Brink" (page 269) and "The War On Guns" (page 10) and with a Disney animation teaser for "Wreck-It Ralph 2". ➔13

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# One-month sugar detox: A nutritionist explains how and why

By Lisa Drayer

If you’ve read about the latest wellness trends, you may have entertained the idea of a diet detox.

But whether you’ve considered juicing, fasting or cleansing in an effort to lose weight or improve your well-being, you’re probably aware that drastically cutting out foods is not effective as a long-term lifestyle approach to healthy eating.

In fact, strict detoxing can cause issues including fatigue, dizziness and low blood sugar.

But there is one kind of sustainable detox that is worthwhile, according to some experts. Reducing sugar in your diet can help you drop pounds, improve your health and even give you more radiant skin.

“Sugar makes you fat, ugly and old,” said Brooke Alpert, a registered dietitian and co-author of “The Sugar Detox: Lose the Sugar, Lose the Weight -- Look and Feel Great.” “What we’ve discovered in the last couple of years is that sugar is keeping us overweight. It’s also a leading cause of heart disease; it negatively affects skin, and it leads to premature aging.”

### ■ Sugar addiction

Here’s more bad news: We can’t stop consuming sugar. “People have a real dependency -- a real addiction to sugar,” Alpert said. “We have sugar, we feel good from it, we get (the feeling of) an upper, and then we crash and need to reach for more.”

About 10% of the US population are true sugar addicts, according to Robert Lustig, professor of pediatrics and member of the Institute for Health Policy Studies at the University of California, San Francisco. What’s more, research suggests that sugar induces rewards and cravings that are similar in magnitude to those induced by addictive drugs.

One of the biggest concerns is the amount of added sugars in our diets, which are often hidden in foods. Although ice cream cake is an obvious source of sugar, other foods that may not even taste sweet -- such as salad dressings, tomato sauces and breads -- can be loaded with the white stuff.

“People don’t realize that seemingly healthy foods are loaded with sugar -- and so we’re basically eating sugar all day long, from morning till night,” Alpert said.

How to sugar detox: Going cold turkey for three days

The good news is that even if you’re not a true sugar “addict,” by eliminating sugar from your diet, you can quickly lose unwanted pounds, feel better and have a more radiant appearance.

“There is no one person who wouldn’t benefit by eliminating added sugars from their diets,” Lustig said.

Children can benefit, too. Lustig’s research revealed that when obese children eliminated added sugars from their diets for just nine days, every aspect of their metabolic health improved -- despite no changes in body weight or total calories consumed. But going cold turkey is what works best, at least in the beginning.

“Early on in my practice, when I would notice that people had real addiction to sugar, we’d start trying to wean them of sugar or limit their intake or eat in moderation ... but the word ‘moderation’ is so clichéd and not effective,” Alpert said. “It was just ineffective to ask people to eat less of something



when they’re struggling with this bad habit. You wouldn’t ask an alcoholic to just drink two beers.

“What was so successful in getting my clients to kick their sugar habit was to go cold turkey. When they would go cold turkey, I wasn’t their favorite person -- but the number one positive effect was that it recalibrated their palate,” she said. “They could now taste natural sugars in fruits, vegetables and dairy that they used to be so dulled to.”

So for the first three days on a sugar detox, Alpert recommends no added sugars -- but also no fruits, no starchy vegetables (such as corn, peas, sweet potatoes and butternut squash), no dairy, no grains and no alcohol. “You’re basically eating protein, vegetables and healthy fats.”

For example, breakfast can include three eggs, any style; lunch can include up to 6 ounces of poultry, fish or tofu and a green salad, and dinner is basically a larger version of lunch, though steamed vegetables such as broccoli, kale and spinach can be eaten in place of salad. Snacks include an ounce of nuts and sliced peppers with hummus. Beverages include water, unsweetened tea and black coffee.

Though they don’t contribute calories, artificial sweeteners are not allowed on the plan, either. “These little pretty colored packets pack such a punch of sweetness, and that’s how our palates get dulled and immune and less reactive to what sweetness really is,” Alpert said.

Consuming artificial sweeteners causes “you not only (to) store more fat,” Lustig explained, “you also end up overeating later on to compensate for the increased energy storage.”

### ■ How to sugar detox: When an apple tastes like candy

Once the first three days of the sugar detox are completed, you can add an apple.

“By the fourth day, an apple tastes like candy,” Alpert said.

“The onions are sweet! Almonds are sweet! Once you take

sugar away from your diet cold turkey, your palate recalibrates, and you start tasting natural sugars again.”

Starting with day four, you can add one apple and one dairy food each day. Dairy, such as yogurt or cheese, should be full-fat and unsweetened. “Fat, fiber and protein slow the absorption of sugar, so taking out fat from dairy will make you absorb sugar faster,” Alpert said.

You can also add some higher-sugar vegetables such as carrots and snow peas, as well as a daily serving of high-fiber crackers. Three glasses of red wine in that first week can be added, too.

During week two, you can add a serving of antioxidant-rich berries and an extra serving of dairy. You can also add back starchy vegetables such as yams and winter squash.

For week three, you can add grains such as barley, quinoa and oatmeal, and even some more fruit including grapes and clementines. You can also have another glass of red wine during the week and an ounce of dark chocolate each day.

“Week three should be quite livable,” Alpert said.

Week four is the home stretch, when you can enjoy two starches per day, including bread and rice, in addition to high-fiber crackers. Wine goes up to five glasses per week.

“You can have a sandwich in week four, which just makes things easier,” Alpert said. “I want people living. Week four is the way to do it.”

Week four defines the maintenance part of the plan -- though intentional indulgences are allowed, such as ice cream or a piece of cake at a birthday party. “Because the addictive behavior is gone, having ice cream once or twice will not send you back to square one,” Alpert said. Additionally, no fruit is off-limits once you’ve completed the 31 days.

“The whole purpose is to give people control and ownership and a place for these foods in our life,” Alpert said.

(Source: CNN)

## Signs a toxic person is manipulating you

By Kari Langslet

Chances are high you’ve encountered a toxic person in your life. You may have even realized this “friend” or family member was no good (kudos to you!), but it can often be hard to distinguish between feelings of love and friendship and feelings of guilt and manipulation. Toxic people are really good at purposefully confusing us.

We reached out to Nancy Irwin, Psy.D., as well as author, therapist, and general badass survivor Shannon Thomas, LCSW, to help us spot the toxic people in our lives—and learn how we can separate ourselves from them.

### ■ So, what exactly makes a person toxic?

In order to detoxify our lives, we first need to be able to understand and spot a toxic person. They look like everyone else, talk like everyone else, and can even be disguised as your best friend, family member, or partner. “Toxic people are master manipulators, skilled liars, and great actors,” Thomas says. “They can be hiding everywhere.”

One way to tell you have a toxic person in your life: Every time you encounter or hang out with them, you feel exhausted, emotionally drained, and negative. There’s always something with this person.

Irwin describes a toxic person as anyone who is abusive, unsupportive, or unhealthy emotionally—someone who basically brings you down more than up. “You may begin to feel dependent on him or her for their opinion, doubting your own,” she says.

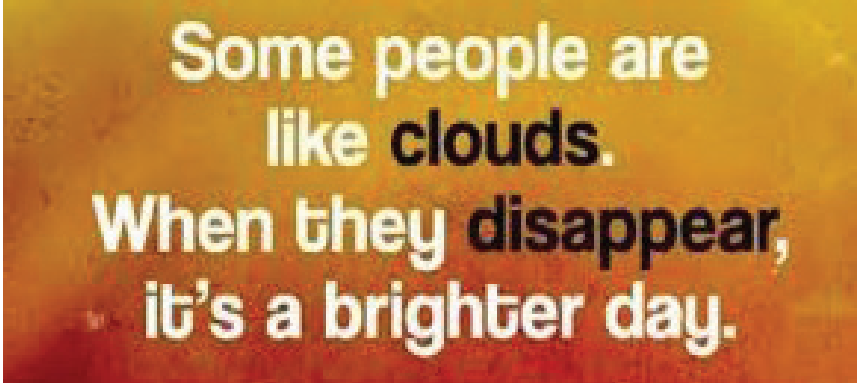
“Toxic people are draining and leave you emotionally wiped out,” Thomas says. “They want you to feel sorry for them and responsible for all their problems—and then fix these problems too.”

### ■ Are you dealing with a toxic person?

“The best gauge is to see how you feel after interacting with someone—our physical and emotional reactions to people are our best indicators,” Thomas says, noting that you should consider whether you’re more tense, anxious, or angry after seeing that person, texting with them, or talking to them on the phone.

Other signs to keep an eye out for, according to Thomas, is if the person is constantly judgmental, obsessively needy, and/or refuses to take responsibility or apologize for their actions.

“This could be someone who uses drugs or drinks excessively, lies or asks you to lie



for them, is controlling, or belittles what you do,” Irwin says. She also says the life of a toxic person is often out of control financially, professionally, physically, personally, and/or interpersonally.

### ■ How does being around a toxic person affect your life?

“Toxic people have the ability to affect all areas of our lives, and we are often blind to this,” Thomas says. “We make excuses for them. We believe and internalize the lies they feed us. And, in turn, that affects how we view ourselves and our worth. Toxic people receive pleasure from taking joy away from the things we once loved, such as work, friendships, hobbies, and even our love for ourselves.”

“If you feel unheard or unseen, and feel used or coerced into doing things that are really not ‘you,’ you may be influenced by a toxic person,” Irwin says. “Toxic people can cause you to doubt yourself or do things you ordinarily would not do—you may feel a desire to ‘be cool’ or fit in or get their approval. Every case is different, but toxic people can negatively influence others by manipulating them to do things. They tend to create chaos through negative habits: using, lying, stealing, controlling, criticizing, bullying, manipulating, creating drama, etc.”

### ■ Signs you’re being manipulated

“Many people don’t know they’re being manipulated until it’s too late,” Irwin says. “You know you are being manipulated when you begin doing, saying, or believing things that are serving them, as opposed to you. Healthy people encourage and empower you to be your best. Manipulators tell people that they know what’s best for you.”

So what are the red flags—the actual, concrete signs that someone is manipulating us? Thomas breaks it down into the following three categories:

1. The blame game  
No matter how many painful situations a toxic person purposely puts you in, they won’t apologize. They constantly find ways to make you responsible for their actions.
2. Isolation  
Have you noticed that you no longer spend time with other people? A toxic person will demand your full attention and shame you if they feel like you’re not giving them enough of yourself.  
For instance, John ToxicPants monopolizes all of your time, to the extent that he freaks out when he sees on social media that you hung out with other friends—without him. You then realize you spend nearly all your free time with this person and have forgotten what your other friends look like. It’s not good.
3. Walking on eggshells  
Toxic people thrive on keeping you on your toes and use emotional outbursts to do so. You never know what type of mood they’ll be in, and you have to watch what you say around them—or you’ll receive 15 text messages about a molehill of a problem that manifested into a mountain, along with a laundry list of all the reasons you’re a terrible person, your career is going nowhere, and you’re not as good as they are.  
You might have a friend, who can’t handle a casual hangout. Every time you see him, there’s a whole emotional scene, he brings up a problem that you caused or need to solve, or involves you in a draining exchange that stresses you out and makes you doubt yourself and your character.  
OK, now that we know what a toxic person looks like and how they’re manipulating us, how do we get them out of our lives and never to fall prey to their manipulation games again?  
Do you have to change your number and get a new email address? Not quite—unless

you’ve been experiencing abuse—but you do need to set boundaries until you are able to fully stop communicating with them. Thomas recommends you start with detached contact, which means you still have occasional interactions but from a new emotional state.

“Getting a toxic person out of your life is all about setting boundaries,” she says. “For example, you may not return a toxic person’s call right away and instead wait 30 minutes to call back.” This can help you work through the anxiety of not jumping when they tell you to jump.

“The best way to remove a toxic person is by implementing no contact,” Thomas says. “While this path has its own set of challenges, once the removal of toxicity has occurred and the dust has settled, having no contact is the most concrete way of moving forward and away from a toxic person.”

Irwin recommends giving yourself some distance before you start tapering off the contact, noting that this is harder if the person is your current partner or a former mate you have kids with.

“If they are a co-worker, perhaps you can transfer to another department or cubicle farther away,” she says. “You may need to talk to HR. If they are a sibling, you might try family therapy and set boundaries. If they’re an ex, lose their email/phone number.”

### ■ Take time to heal and get positive.

Removing a toxic person from your life is only part of the battle—definitely a big part, but you’ll also have to give yourself time to heal. Even though a sizable weight will be lifted off your shoulders, a lot of damage has been done emotionally (and sometimes physically) in these relationships.

Ultimately, it is the right decision to end your relationship with this person, but that doesn’t make it easy—and it can be a process. “It’s all about healing in stages and realizing it will not happen all at once,” Thomas says. “It’s important to take it day by day, celebrate the little victories, and have patience as you overcome the minor setbacks. Surround yourself with supportive individuals who love you and are on your side.”

And remember to be generous—to you. “Forgive yourself for being taken in by a skilled manipulator,” Irwin says. “Learn from that experience and listen to your heart to make your own choices going forward.” And if you need a little help? That’s perfectly OK. Be proud of yourself and all the steps you’ve taken to make your life better.

(Source: greatist.com)

## Information for parents about ear tubes

By Kristin Hayes

Myringotomy and insertion of ear tubes or myringotomy tubes, are used to treat and prevent chronic ear infections or fluid in the ear. Ear infections can occur when the Eustachian tube -- also called an auditory tube -- becomes filled with fluid instead of air, creating an environment for bacteria to grow and thrive.

Children are more likely to suffer from chronic ear infections because their Eustachian tube is at a more horizontal angle, shorter and narrower than that of an adult.

A myringotomy is a small incision in the tympanic membrane to drain the pus and relieve pressure and ear tubes are tiny tubes made of plastic or metal which will hold the Eustachian tube open and allow fluid and bacteria to continue drainage and for ongoing ventilation of the middle ear. Without ear tubes, the myringotomy incisions would close up within a couple of days.

### ■ Indications for ear tubes

Insertion of ear tubes can help treat and prevent a variety of inner ear disorders. The most common reason for ear tube insertion is for treatment of acute/chronic ear infections, however, other reasons are:

- improve severe symptoms of ear infections
- hearing loss related to excess fluid in the middle ear
- damage to ear structures related to flying or scuba diving (barotrauma)
- speech and balance problems

### ■ How are ear tubes placed?

Ear tubes are usually placed in a same day surgery setting. This could be in a hospital or a surgical center.

Before the surgery, someone will call you and give you instructions. Your child will not be allowed to eat or drink before surgery. This reduces the risk of aspiration of stomach contents into the lungs while under anesthesia.

The nurses and doctors will need a complete health history and a list of any medications that your child has been taking.

Medications which may thin the blood, such as aspirin, should not be taken before surgery unless you are otherwise instructed by your physician. Even high doses of vitamin E and some other herbal supplements can thin your blood. If your child drinks from a bottle or special cup, make sure you bring it along. It’s also a good idea to bring a “comfort item” such as a pacifier, blanket, or favorite stuffed animal.

The surgery itself is short, on average lasting half an hour or less. Your child will be sedated and should not have much, if any, pain. However, the combination of anesthetic drugs and the strange environment will probably make your child fussy.

You will need to remain at the hospital for a while after the procedure is over. Your child’s temperature, blood pressure, heart and respiratory rates, and oxygenation will all be monitored while they recover from sedation.

### ■ What to expect after surgery

Before you leave the hospital, you will receive a comprehensive set of instructions explaining how to care for your child after surgery. It is important to follow these instructions carefully. Generally speaking, most children can return to normal activities a day or two later. However, it is very important that no water is allowed to enter the ear.

Talk to your doctor about having your child fitted for ear plugs to be worn while swimming or bathing.

### ■ Will the tubes need to be removed?

No. As your child grows, their Eustachian tube will grow as well. As the diameter of the tube increases the synthetic tube will become loose and fall out on its own. This is normal. The incision will heal on its own shortly after. Occasionally a new set of tubes will need to be placed, but often the growth of the Eustachian tube will be sufficient to prevent your child from suffering from chronic ear infections again. In some cases the ear tubes can become stuck in the auditory tube.

In this case the surgeon may decide to remove the old ear tubes and place a new set in the ears at the same time.

(Source: verywell.com)

## A sudden loss of wealth increases your chances of death

By Alexandra Sifferlin

When people lose 75% or more of their wealth, they are 50% more likely to die early than people whose wealth remains steady, according to new research.

In the study, published Tuesday in the journal JAMA, researchers examined how losing financial stability impacts a person’s health over time. Lindsay Pool, a research assistant professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and her colleagues looked at more than 8,700 people, ages 51-61, who were participating in a national study. The researchers looked at how experiencing a “negative wealth shock”—defined as losing 75% or more of their total asset value, including things like a pension, home or business, over two years—affected a person’s mortality.

Over a 20-year follow-up period, 25% of people experienced a negative wealth shock; those men and women were at a much higher risk for death from all causes.

“This is something millions of people go through,” says Pool. “It’s not really a rare event.”

The researchers also found that when they looked at a group of low-income adults, their risk of death over 20 years was 67%. Poverty is known to impact a person’s health and mortality, but the researchers were surprised that losing wealth had a similar impact on a person’s risk for early death as having no wealth to begin with. The link between financial loss and risk of death was also the same across people’s initial income levels. “This is not a study of the 1%,” says Pool.

The study did not look at how the loss of wealth directly impacted people’s health. However, “the hypothesis is that wealth shock is a stressful event, and chronic stress over the long-term can affect pretty much every organ system,” says Pool.

The findings have serious implications for many Americans who may undergo a financial crisis, and the research underscores the link between health and financial instability. “People don’t want to lose their jobs,” says Pool. It’s not on them, “but on policymakers to figure out a way to intervene.”

(Source: time.com)



## RoboCup Iran Open reaches finish line

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Winners of the 13th RoboCup Iran Open competitions were announced on Saturday. Organized by the Iranian RoboCup Regional Committee and Qazvin Islamic Azad University, the RoboCup Iran Open 2018 was held at Tehran Permanent International Fairground from April 3 to 7.

In Iran Open Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Outdoor league, MRL Rescue Team from Qazvin Islamic Azad University ranked first. IRSE team from South Tehran Islamic Azad University was the runner-up and the third prize went to ATRON from Khomeini Shahr Islamic Azad University.



In Iran Open UAV Speed Race league, the first prize went to SIRFPV, PARNIA won the second prize and the third prize went to FPV MAN from Khorramabad Islamic Azad University.

MRL Rescue Team from Qazvin Islamic Azad University won the first prize in RoboCup Rescue Robot Category. The second prize went to YRA from Yazd Islamic Azad University and KN2C from Khajeh Nasir Toosi University of Technology won the third prize.

In Iran Open UAV Indoor league, CYRUS won the first prize. SAMEN was the runner-up and the third prize went to MEGA UAV.

In RoboCup Deminer, Tele-Operated Deminer Robots category SAMAUAV from Sama Islamic Azad University won the first prize. The second prize went to SRC from Tabriz Islamic Azad University and Royan from Royan Sanat Tabarestan Company won the third prize.

ER-Force from Germany's University of Erlangen-Nuremberg ranked first in RoboCup Soccer, small size category. ZJUNLICIT from Zhejiang University of China won the second prize and the third prize went to Parsian from Iran.

A total of 478 teams competed at the contest, out of which 38 competitors were from 11 countries including China, the U.S., Turkey, the UK, Singapore and India.

According to the official website of the contest, the main categories of Iran Open 2018 are RoboCupSoccer, RoboCupRescue, RoboCup@Home, RoboCup@Work, RoboCup Junior and IranOpenDeminer.

RoboCup (Originally called Robot World Cup Initiative) is an international research and education initiative. It is an attempt to foster AI and intelligent robotics research by providing a standard problem where wide range of technologies can be integrated and examined, as well as being used for integrated project-oriented education.

## Facebook plans to let everyone unsend messages, will stop Zuckerberg until then

TechCrunch reported last night that Facebook retracted Facebook messages sent by Mark Zuckerberg and other executives from their recipients' inboxes. That's an ability normal Facebook users don't have. But now Facebook tells me it plans to make an "unsend" feature available to all users in several months, and has already been considering how to build this product. Until the Unsend feature is released for everyone, Facebook says it won't unsend or retract any more of Zuckerberg's messages.

The retractions of the CEO's chats were never previously disclosed until Facebook confirmed the news to TechCrunch last night after we reported having email receipt evidence of messages that have since disappeared. Many users are seeing that as a breach of trust.

Revealing plans for the Unsend button now could serve to dampen the backlash by making Zuckerberg look like a beta tester of the feature, and eventually normalizing Unsend as a common behavior.

"We have discussed this feature several times. And people using our secret message feature in the encrypted version of Messenger have the ability to set a timer — and have their messages automatically deleted. We will now be making a broader delete message feature available. This may take some time. And until this feature is ready, we will no longer be deleting any executives' messages. We should have done this sooner — and we're sorry that we did not."

To recap, now six sources confirm that Facebook messages they had received from Mark Zuckerberg had disappeared from their inboxes. When we told Facebook we had an email receipt proving the retractions, Facebook gave TechCrunch this statement: "After Sony Pictures' emails were hacked in 2014 we made a number of changes to protect our executives' communications. These included limiting the retention period for Mark's messages in Messenger. We did so in full compliance with our legal obligations to preserve messages."

But tampering with users' inboxes without disclosure has struck many users as a violation of Facebook's power. Many asked why Zuckerberg and other executives had access to functionality not offered to regular users.

Facebook tells TechCrunch it hasn't finalized exactly how the Unsend feature will work. A Facebook Messenger spokesperson tells me the only possible option is an expiration timer users can set on messages. When the timer runs out, the message would disappear from both their and the recipients' inboxes. They tell me this is similar to how retractions of Zuckerberg's messages work.

Facebook encrypted "Secret" messaging feature includes an Unsend option with an expiration timer. But Zuckerberg and other executives didn't use this, and instead had their permanent messages specially retracted.

Facebook already offers a "Secret" encrypted messaging feature that includes an Unsend expiration timer. But this can't be used in existing traditional Facebook message threads, and instead users have to launch a separate "Secret" conversation. Zuckerberg and other executives weren't using this feature, and instead had their permanent, non-"Secret" messages retracted. Instagram also offers an Unsend option in its Direct messaging feature, but warns that while it can retract sent messages, the recipient may have already read them.

(Source: techcrunch.com)

# Only 2% of devices affected by recent cyberattack: IT minister

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — "Only two percent of devices in Iran were affected by the recent cyberattack and the attack was neutralized in two hours," Iran's Communication and Information Technology Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi has said.

Following an attack which was detected late on Friday, a flaw in Cisco switches allowed hackers to target critical infrastructure in many countries with cyberattack, including Iran.

Hackers left the image of a U.S. flag on screens along with a warning about intervention in U.S. election.

"Some 55,000 devices were affected in the United States and 14,000 in China," he said in an interview with state TV on Saturday.

Azari Jahromi named Europe, the U.S. as well as India as the main targets of the cyberattack.

"The widespread attack apparently affected 200,000 router switches across the world, including 3,500 switches in our country," he added.

He said that Iran was not amongst the top ten victims of the cyberattack, however, an Iranian data company, Respina, ranked 6th among data companies that were affected worldwide.



He named other companies including ISIRAN, and Shuttle as the data centers which were most seriously affected by the attack. Tehran and Semnan cities were mostly affected by the attack, he reported.

He called for being more active and faster

in dealing with these issue by updating data center companies.

**■ Network settings were frozen during Noruz**

Previously, Azari Jahromi in a tweet lamented the state-run computer emergency

response body MAHER, a Persian acronym for the Computer-related Events Operation and Coordination Center, which had shown "weaknesses in providing information to (affected) companies".

The telecommunications ministry revealed on Saturday that ten days ago CISCO had warned about the vulnerability of the router switches that were attacked Friday night.

However, many companies froze their networks' settings during the two-week New Year holidays, Noruz, starting March 21, and that the companies did not update their settings as MAHER failed to inform them of the imminent attack. Friday is a weekend day in Iran.

On Saturday, chief of the detection and prevention center at FATA (Iran's Cyber Police) said that no sensitive data has been leaked in the Friday cyberattack.

Ali Niknafs added that any Iranian company or organization that faces some type of disorder or anomaly in its network after starting work on Saturday morning should take immediate action to resolve the problems.

According to a security report from the Cisco Talos team, as many as 168,000 systems in the world might have been affected by the flaw.

## Incredibly useful tools for your digital spring cleaning

Spring has traditionally meant cleaning, organizing and mops. But in our increasingly high-tech households, your hard drive, phone or tablet may need as much attention as your broom closet and stove.

It's not just stuff. Your privacy needs a cleanup too. You'd be shocked at how much Google tracks you, including when and where you have been.

Here are five tools that can help you organize your virtual (and real) environments.

### ■ 1. Clean up your browser

Cookies are like the gunk in your roof gutters: you can't see them, but they're there, clogging everything up and keeping your computer from running fluidly. The same goes for download history.

A free program called CCleaner helps you sort out the cookies and archives you don't really need. When you download the app, you can focus on a specific browser that you would like to clean up. CCleaner analyzes its backlog of information and lists the data that seems unnecessary.

### ■ 2. Speed up your smartphone

Most of us already know about cluttered desktops, but what about smartphones? Our phones are essentially handheld computers, and when they overflow with useless information, their operations can also slow down. These aren't necessarily apps, but overburdened call logs, search history, and saved texts.

For Android users, there's iTap Cleaner, an app that earns its name. The app gathers that data in one place, letting you decide what to keep. Most of us are surprised by how many outdated messages and URLs get archived, a data stream

that we will probably never refer to again. Then again, you do want to make sure irreplaceable bits (landmark texts, unsaved photos) survive the deep clean.

### ■ 3. Remove redundant images

Digital photos are easy to shoot, upload and copy, which is handy in almost every respect, especially if you grew up lugging rolls of film to the one-hour photo lab. The downside is that you may end up with multiple copies of the same picture. If you're shooting with a decent camera, each shot could take 10MG or more of space. This volume adds up.

The trick is to safely delete redundant photos without losing the original image. This is the premise behind Duplicate Photo Fixer, which is designed to filter through your photo collection in search of double takes.

The program is compatible with Windows, iOS and Android. Not only can Duplicate Photo Fixer find identical photos on your hard drive, but it will also match similar photos — so don't worry if you cropped an image or tinkered with its brightness and contrast.

### ■ 4. Catalogue all your physical belongings

We see household objects every day, but what do we actually own? You may be the type of person who likes to keep track of every ironing board and lampshade in the house, or you may want to compile a report for insurance companies, so there is no question whether something has been stolen or lost.

The Encircle app works on both iOS and Android and was created to take inventory of your worldly possessions. Just take a photo of each valuable object, then attach notes to the image, including its original cost, relevant serial numbers,

and even appraisals. Makes the process super easy.

### ■ 5. Sell your secondhand stuff online

Every time I clean my house, I discover something I never use and want to throw out. But sometimes that knickknack has monetary value, and I could probably make a little money off it. Craigslist isn't very dependable these days, with all the scams and false advertisements going around, so where can you offer your old television to the highest bidder?

There are several online markets I recommend, which are considered more trustworthy than Craigslist, but are still free and user-friendly. (Note: Scams can happen just about anywhere, so keep an eye out, even on these sites).

Like eBay, in OfferUp you sift through commodities and make an offer. Unlike eBay, OfferUp isn't an auction site, and you don't have to wait for a clock to tick down. Also, OfferUp uses the TruYou system, which confirms the identities of buyers and sellers. Your junk may just prove to be someone else's treasure.

Some folks would balk at the idea of purchasing used clothes. But others have made a career out of browsing vintage stores for incredible finds. ThredUp is much like those stores, because qualified fashion experts determine whether items fit their quality standards. If you have a smart leather jacket or a pair of dress shoes, you might consider putting them up for sale.

Lots of us like the old-fashioned garage sale, and we skip the virtual bazaar altogether. GSALR helps you find those backyard events, based on the location you enter into the website. You'll find a map with all the garage sales happening locally, or you can list your own.

(Source: msn.com)

## Innovation ecosystem development plan starts



**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has announced the start of a national innovation ecosystem development plan, aiming to boost technology ecosystem, strengthen knowledge-based economy as well as support innovative jobs and start-ups.

Over 3,000 knowledge-based companies are established in different fields of industry and technology, which are influential in the field of economy, society and human resources, the vice president for science

and technology Parviz Karami explained. He said that innovative companies including organizations of private sectors which are active in the field of creative industry and cultural activities that are mostly IT-based.

Innovation ecosystem moves innovations from discovery to commercialization which involves numerous actors, often including academic researchers, small businesses, the investor community, and commercial industry.

## Cellphone registration scheme to resume



**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Cellphone users in Iran shall resume the registration process based on the country's telecommunications database from late April.

Iran performs the long-awaited national scheme to stop growing market for smuggled cellphones. In the second half of the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2018, about half of brands at cellphone market were registered.

Iran Customs Administration has imposed a 5-percent customs duty on the imports of

cellphones and the importers should pay the 9-percent value added tax (VAT).

Those devices which are not registered with the database will be considered contraband and will be rendered unusable in the country.

According to Iranian officials 12.5 million cellphone devices are smuggled into the country depriving the government of \$350 million in tax revenues. Head of Iran's State Union of Audio-Video Equipment and Cell Phone Sellers Ebrahim Dorosti announced in a press conference in January 2018.

## Smartphones becoming primary device for physician and patient communications

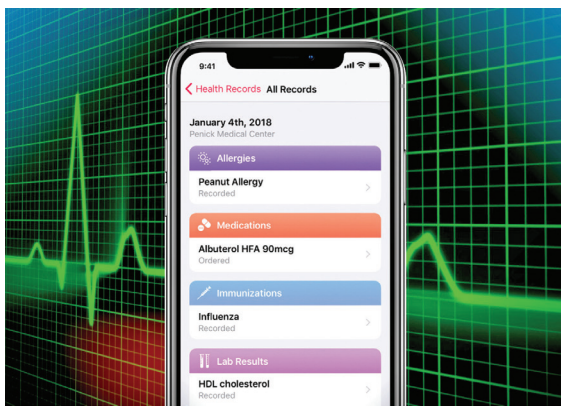
Once considered a security risk, mobile devices are now becoming a mainstay in clinical settings for communication, the difference being the software and cloud services being used to secure data.

Hospitals are making significant investments in smartphone and secure mobile platforms to enable communications between clinicians and between them and patients, according to a new survey.

Nine of 10 healthcare systems plan significant investments in smartphones and secure unified communications over the next 12 to 18 months, according to the results of the survey, performed in person by Spyglass Consulting Group; the survey included more than 100 healthcare professionals working in hospital environments.

Smartphones being provided to hospital workers for communications are a 50/50 mix of purpose-built devices for the healthcare industry and consumer models, such as the Apple iPhone or Android phones, according to Gregg Malkary, managing director of the Spyglass Consulting Group.

"The whole idea of patient-staff communications is a relatively new concept," Malkary said, referring to the 2012 requirements set down by the federal government's



"meaningful use" of electronic healthcare records (EHR) standards. "So, when you look at these investments in smartphones and secure mobile communications, they really are driving clinical transformation as they try to address ... requirements.

Hardened mobile devices in use include smartphones such as the Zebra TC51 and the Honeywell Dolphin.

"They're hardened so if you drop them or it gets wet or has blood or feces on it, you can easily clean it. They also have integrated bar code scanner," Malkary said. "There's justification for using them, but they're pretty expensive."

"There are also many organizations buying Apple iPhones for care providers," Malkary continued. "It used to be that Apple's phone was considered an inadequate device."

Clinicians will often use both a hardened device and a consumer-grade smartphone to communicate with one another and patients. For example, purpose-built devices can be integrated with in-hospital patient call systems, so nurses are paged when a patient hits the call button, increasing responsiveness.

"If you're in a [hospital] ward, one of the biggest frustrations for patient satisfaction is nurses not responding to call buttons," Malkary said.

The survey found that 68% of hospitals are also using middleware to collect, monitor and manage data, alerts and alarms generated from hospital legacy systems, including nurse call, biomedical devices, pharmacy orders, laboratory results, and electronic healthcare records (EHR).

(Source: computerworld.com)



# New source of global nitrogen discovered, scientists say

For centuries, the prevailing science has indicated that all of the nitrogen on Earth available to plants comes from the atmosphere. But a study from the University of California, Davis, indicates that more than a quarter comes from Earth's bedrock.

The study, to be published April 6 in the journal Science, found that up to 26 percent of the nitrogen in natural ecosystems is sourced from rocks, with the remaining fraction from the atmosphere.

Before this study, the input of this nitrogen to the global land system was unknown. The discovery could greatly improve climate change projections, which rely on understanding the carbon cycle. This newly identified source of nitrogen could also feed the carbon cycle on land, allowing ecosystems to pull more emissions out of the atmosphere, the authors said.

**■ Source of nutrition**

“Our study shows that nitrogen weathering is a globally significant source of nutrition to soils and ecosystems worldwide,” said co-lead author Ben Houlton, a professor in the UC Davis Department of Land, Air and Water Resources and director of the UC Davis Muir Institute. “This runs counter the centuries-long paradigm that has laid the foundation for the environmental sciences. We think that this nitrogen may allow forests and grasslands to sequester more fossil fuel CO2 emissions than previously thought.”

Ecosystems need nitrogen and other nutrients to absorb carbon dioxide pollution, and there is a limited amount of it available from plants and soils. If a large



amount of nitrogen comes from rocks, it helps explain how natural ecosystems like boreal forests are capable of taking up high levels of carbon dioxide.

**Mapping nutrient profiles in rocks to their potential for carbon uptake could help drive conservation considerations. Areas with higher levels of rock nitrogen weathering may be able to sequester more carbon.**

But not just any rock can leach nitrogen. Rock nitrogen availability is determined by weathering, which can be physical, such as through tectonic movement, or chemical, such as when minerals react with rainwater.

That's primarily why rock nitrogen weathering varies across regions and landscapes. The study said that large areas of Africa are devoid of nitrogen-rich bedrock while northern latitudes have some of the highest levels of rock nitrogen weathering.

**■ Weathering rates**

Mountainous regions like the Himalayas and Andes are estimated to be significant sources of rock nitrogen weathering, similar to those regions' importance to global weathering rates and climate. Grasslands, tundra, deserts and woodlands also experience sizable rates of rock nitrogen weathering.

Mapping nutrient profiles in rocks to their potential for carbon uptake could help drive conservation considerations. Areas with higher levels of rock nitrogen weathering may be able to sequester more carbon.

“Geology might have a huge control over which systems can take up carbon dioxide and which ones don't,” Houlton said. “When thinking about carbon sequestration, the geology of the planet can help guide our decisions about what we're conserving.” The work also elucidates the “case of the missing nitrogen.” For decades, scientists have recognized that more nitrogen accumulates in soils and plants than can be explained by the atmosphere alone, but they could not pinpoint what was missing.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Hypothesis suggests toxic flowers helped wipe out dinosaurs

Was the dinosaurs' extinction partly because of flowers? A new research suggests that their toxic meals were partly the reason why the asteroid that caused the dinosaurs' extinction was so successful at wiping them out.

It's difficult to say what exactly caused the dinosaur die out, but there are many theories on the matter, some of them rather unusual.

The Biotic Revenge hypothesis was the main topic of a new study published in the journal Ideas in Ecology and Evolution. The hypothesis suggests that ancient plants are partly to blame for the dinosaur wipeout. Evidently, even after the rise of toxic angiosperms, the dinosaurs still kept on eating the plants because they haven't yet developed taste aversion and because they needed to keep on consuming large amounts of plants to sustain their energy needs. Unfortunately, their lack of taste aversion led to the creatures eating lethal amounts of toxic plants.

**■ Dinosaurs' extinction**

That's not saying the theory suggests that dinosaurs weren't rendered extinct by a massive asteroid. In fact, it supports the currently held theory, but the hypothesis simply suggests that at the time that the asteroid hit, the herbivores were already in decline because of their toxic meals, and as such, the carnivores were shrinking in numbers as well.

The hypothesis may sound rather unusual to some, but there



are other hypotheses on dinosaur extinction that are rather interesting as well. Unlike the new hypothesis, however, many of them have already been discarded and debunked.

It seems rather unusual to blame caterpillars for the dinosaur extinction, but a 1962 paper by entomologist Stanley Flanders suggested that caterpillars might have devastated the Cretaceous vegetation, leaving the herbivores to starve. As the herbivores slowly died out, the predators were left to eat each other.

However, butterflies and moths actually coexisted with

dinosaurs for millions of years, and there is no evidence of a caterpillar spike in the fossil records.

**■ Horns and crests developed**

In 1982, ophthalmologist L.R. Croft suggested that dinosaurs with horns and crests developed the features as a means to protect their eyes from the sun.

However, because the sun at the time was still much too harsh, the horns still weren't enough to protect their eyes, and the creatures began to go blind even before reaching sexual maturity.

However, as interesting as the hypothesis is, it does not explain the mass extinction of other dinosaur species.

Twentieth-century paleontologist George Wieland once argued that the dinosaurs loved eating eggs and that even some dinosaur mothers could not protect their young. However, his 1925 hypothesis about how dinosaurs might have eaten themselves to extinction was unsupported by fossil records that show that while snakes and dinosaurs did indeed prey on eggs and dinosaur young, it was not to a rate that they caused their own mass extinction.

In the 1900s, there was a belief that perhaps the dinosaurs experienced an evolutionary inertia that led to them getting bigger and bigger but less adaptable to the changing environment.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Climate change is wreaking havoc on relationships between orchids and bees

The first definitive demonstration of climate change upsetting the vital interdependent relationships between species has been revealed, thanks to a study led by the University of Sussex.

Research led by Professor Michael Hutchings at the University of Sussex tracks how rising temperatures since the mid-17th century have wrecked a relationship, which relies on precision timing to succeed, between a rare orchid species and the Buffish Mining-bee which pollinates it.

Professor Hutchings, Emeritus Professor in Ecology, said the climate is changing so rapidly that the early spider orchid cannot respond effectively, leaving this species, and probably many other plants with highly specialized pollination mechanisms, facing the threat of severe

decline and possible extinction.

**■ Climate-induced changes**

Professor Hutchings said: “It is likely that many other species dependencies are also suffering from climate-induced changes to their life cycles. This study is, we believe, the best documentation we have as yet of such an effect and confirms with hard data the long-held concerns of ecologists.

“While this is especially bad news for the early spider orchid, the devastating impact of climate change is in all likelihood harming the delicate interdependent relationships of many species.”

The early spider orchid achieves pollination by emitting a scent that imitates that of a female Buffish Mining-bee. The smell fools

male bees into attempting to mate (pseudocopulation) with the flower. In doing so, the male bee dislodges pollen masses from the flower. These pollen masses are then transported to different flowers when the bee next attempts pseudocopulation.

Pollination depends not only on male bees emerging before female bees and before flowering, but also, crucially, on the orchid flowering before female bees emerge.

**■ Rising temperatures**

However, rising temperatures have led to male bee flight, female bee flight and flowering all occurring earlier in the calendar year, but the timings of the three events are not changing at the same rate. This is causing an increasing frequency of years in which the sequence of

events needed for successful pollination (male bee emergence before orchid flowering before female bee emergence) does not occur.

For every 1 °C rise in spring temperature, the peak flying dates of male and female bees occur 9.2 and 15.6 days earlier in the year but the orchids' peak flowering advances by just 6.4 days.

The study shows that, since the mid-17th century, as recorded spring temperatures have gradually risen, the interval between male and female bees emerging from hibernation has decreased significantly. Most critically, however, higher spring temperatures now make female bees likely to achieve peak flying more than a week before peak orchid flowering date.

(Source: phys.org)

## A credit line, worth €30mn, allocated to EDBI

A credit line, worth 30 million euro, between Iran and Europe was allocated to the Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Manager of Export Development Bank of Iran for International Affairs Hamid-Reza Ma'boudi announced the above statement and said, “the mentioned amount has been earmarked to the Export Development Bank of Iran to finance importing goods and services.”

In the wake of conclusion of short-term finance contract (refinance) directly with Iran import and export bank and Europe's Hamburg Bank (Eihbank), the amount of 30 million euro was earmarked to Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI).

Given the above issue, customers of the bank can embark on submitting request to take advantage of the mentioned refinance credit line with observing rules and regulations



for opening import Letter of Credit (L/C). He described the terms and conditions related to this credit line and added, “the repayment period for staples would be six months while yearlong grace period has been

dedicated for importing necessary raw materials.”

It should be noted that the said amount is payable with 2.75 percent interest rate with considering two percent commission rate, the manager opined.

Submitting request for opening Letters of Credit (L/Cs) under the refinance credit, referral of customer to the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade for registering goods ordering process, submitting needed documents such as auditing financial statements, coordinating with the investment and financing department with regard to the possibility of payment of the fund to seller, issuance of bylaw by the Branch's Credit Committee and/or referring to the Credit management Bureau for the issuance of bylaw, notifying bylaw to customer, etc. are of the executive stages for using this credit line, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

## MUSE releases stunning images from our galactic neighbor

Astronomers have released stunning new images from one our closest galactic neighbors, the Small Magellanic Cloud — a dwarf galaxy located ‘just’ 200,000 light years from Earth.



The pictures, which were taken using The Multi Unit Spectroscopic Explorer (MUSE) instrument on the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile, as well as others — have helped researchers to identify an elusive object known as an isolated neutron star outside our own galaxy for the first time.

This neutron star is essentially a stellar corpse buried among clouds of gas left over from a 2,000-year-old supernova — the titanic explosion that occurs at the end of a massive star's life.

These stars are typically just 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) across yet weigh more than our Sun because they are so dense. They are thought to be abundant across the Universe, although they are very difficult to find because they only emit light at X-ray wavelengths.

The scientists, led by ESO fellow Frédéric Vogt, noticed that this ring was centered on a well-known X-ray source which had long puzzled astronomers. Upon further examination with the Chandra X-ray Observatory they were able to identify the object at the center as an isolated neutron star. The fact that the star was identified with the help of optical observations is particularly exciting, the astronomers said.

“If you look for a point source, it doesn't get much better than when the Universe quite literally draws a circle around it to show you where to look,” Vogt said in a statement.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Some frogs may be bouncing back after killer chytrid fungus

It's tough to be a frog once a killer skin fungus moves in. But, in Panama, the amphibians might be fighting back, researchers propose.

More than a decade ago, an amphibian-killing chytrid fungus nicknamed Bd swept through the country. Now some frog species that had nearly vanished from three regions are growing easier to spot again. But tests of the pathogen find no signs that it is weakening, says disease ecologist Jamie Voyles at the University of Nevada, Reno. With the fungus as dangerous as ever, frogs becoming resistant to the pathogen might be enabling the recovery, Voyles and her colleagues report in the March 30 Science.

Despite any glimmer of hope, it's too early to celebrate frog recovery, protests ecologist Karen Lips at the University of Maryland in College Park. She doesn't doubt that researchers have found frogs in the devastated regions, but wants more rigorous monitoring before talking population trends.

The three areas in the study have special resonance. They're where Lips and other scientists set up a disaster watch as they realized that Bd, short for Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis, was sweeping through Central America, killing many amphibians in its path. As the deadly wave approached, the researchers collected data and living animals in the hope they would help in before-and-after studies. The fungus attacked Lips' site, El Copé, in 2004 and the other two sites in 2006 and 2007.

Voyles was working at El Copé as a graduate student when Bd arrived. She remembers the abundance of sick and dying animals, and the task of collecting the dead. “That was shocking, really — there's just no other word for it.”

Using archived, frozen samples of the fungus from those sites, Voyles and colleagues present the first comparison of Bd as it was in 2004 versus in 2012 to 2013, when amphibian communities showed signs of recovering.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

## CRISPR is already changing our world: new study

Even if you have no idea how it works or what the letters stand for, chances are you've at least heard of the revolutionary technology dubbed Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR).

Let's face it, it's no secret that there's a shortage of spare organs for those who desperately need them. Until we can grow new ones from our stem cells, we should consider some alternatives.

Using pigs for their kidneys instead of their bacon might be one solution.

Unfortunately, the risk of catching a common porcine virus is a huge stumbling block, one that CRISPR could be used to solve by taking a molecular chainsaw to the pathogens' genes.

For people with Type 2 diabetes, topping up their body with much-needed insulin can be an invasive and uncomfortable process.

Making a skin graft that contains a CRISPR-modified version of a protein that helps insulin regulate blood glucose levels could help make the needle history.

Editing the genes of humans when they're just a few cells in size is still a futuristic concept that challenges us ethically as well as medically.

But we might already be on our way, with a recent demonstration of CRISPR being used to edit a gene responsible for a heart condition in a human embryo.

The cells weren't encouraged to develop further, but it is a proof of concept of what we could one day achieve.

Filling a garden with a rich floral palette might not seem up there with curing heart defects and treating diabetes, but for many people a more beautiful world is still a better one.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Bank Mellat Sponsors Organizing Iran Intl. Free Robocup Competitions

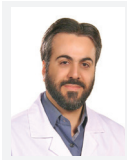
Iran International Robocup Competitions was held at the sponsorship of Bank Mellat in the presence of Dr. Velayati Chairman of Board of Trustees and Dr. Farhad Rahbar chancellor of Islamic Azad University (IAU) as well as chief executive of the bank, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The 13th round of Iran Free Robocup Competitions was held at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on April 3 in the presence of 478





## Celebrate World Health Day with tips from Iranian traditional medicine



### ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

**TEHRAN** — World Health Day, April 7, is a universal health awareness day celebrated since 1950, which is intended to draw worldwide attention to a subject of major importance to global health annually.

Looking at a poster for the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion 2016 giving 12 tips to be healthy I soon started thinking how tips provided by Iranian traditional medicine some 15 centuries ago by Iranian polymaths are more comprehensive than those of World Health Originations to remain healthy.



1) Eating a healthy diet, 2) being physically active, 3) getting vaccinated, 4) not using any form of tobacco, 5) avoiding or minimizing use of alcohol, 6) managing stress for physical and mental health, 7) practicing good hygiene, 8) not speeding or drinking while driving, 9) wearing a seatbelt while driving and a helmet while cycling, 10) practicing safe sex, 11) regularly checking your health, and 12) breast feeding babies are the 12 tips passed on by WHO.

Now let's take a look at the six core principles behind the Iranian traditional medicine. Food and drinks, climatic conditions and environment, physical activities and rest, psychiatric conditions including that of sadness, happiness, depression, and stress, sleep and wakefulness, absorbing key nutrients and ridding body from waste materials (sweat, urine, or feces) are the six fundamental and guiding principles behind the Iranian traditional medicine lifestyle and issues one must take into account while trying to maintain their health.

Healthy habits number 1, 5 and 12 are covered in first principle of the Iranian traditional medicine which is food and drinks. Healthy tips of 2, 8, 9 and 10 are considered in physical activities and rest, while number 3, 10 and 11 are very well acknowledged in absorbing key nutrients and ridding body from waste materials. Also tip number 4 can be deemed as an element in climatic conditions and environment. Healthy habits number 6 and 10 can be also included in psychiatric conditions including that of sadness, happiness, depression, and stress.

And last but not least healthy habit number seven is identified generally in all six core principles of the Iranian traditional medicine.

However, WHO's list of healthy habits is lacking one thing: sleep and wakefulness which plays an important part in keeping healthy. On the other hand it has put emphasis on safe driving, which is certainly important in keeping alive and not sustaining physical injuries, but not directly related to the body's health.

This is the difference between a philosophic, divine, holistic and deep view towards the human health and a shallow, one-dimensional attitude to the subject of health.

*Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, holds a PhD degree in medical physiology and is an Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine (Persian Medicine) researcher. He is also an assistant professor in AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran.*

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Cut It Out

Ed: Hey, Mary, can you **cut that out**?

Mary: Cut what out I'm not doing anything.

Ed: The tapping of your pen on your desk. It's driving me crazy.

Mary: Fine! By the way would you mind not **slurping** your coffee every time you have a cup!

Ed: I don't slurp my coffee. And plus, how can you hear it when you're shouting into your phone all the time?

Mary: **You've got to be kidding me!** You're complaining about me talking on the phone when you go out for a cigarette break ten times a day to **shoot the breeze**?

Ed: Look, we have a lot of **accumulated** anger from working in these conditions, and it's probably okay to **let off steam** once in a while. But, it's probably not a good idea to **keep it up** I'm willing to **forgive and forget** and if you are.

Mary: Fine. Let's **call a truce**. I'll try to more **considerate** and to keep the noise down

Ed: Yeah, I'll try to do the same. So, I was wondering you wanna go out to dinner Friday night?

#### ■ Key vocabulary

**cut that out:** tell somebody to stop

**slurp:** eat or drink (some- thing) noisily

**you've got to be kidding me:** you must be making jokes with me

**shoot the breeze:** chat

**accumulated:** gathered

**let off steam:** to release excess energy, emotion etc.

**keep up:** carry on

**forgive and forget:** stop feeling anger and decide to let it go

**call a truce:** stop fighting

**considerate:** thinking about the feelings of other people

(Source: irlanguage.com)



# Tehran mayor's resignation rejected

**1 →** Commenting on municipality's projects, launched over the past few weeks after submitting his resignation, Najafi said he has done his best to manage the city despite his recent decision to quit.

He defended his urban policies, specifically plans to increase the city livability as well as establishing a council for implementing smart city projects, saying that citizens will see the results of his proposed plans for the city in the near future.

"I was diagnosed with a disease one and a half months ago and must be hospitalized since April 20, the treatment regimen is long and difficult and taking time off the work, as some have suggested, would definitely weaken management structure at the municipality," Najafi explained.

However, 16 members of the 21-member council disagreed with his resignation and he remained in his position for the time being.

Najafi, 66, managed to become the sole candidate to take up the post after his main rivals, namely Habibollah Bitaraf and Mohammad Shariatmadari who were named as cabinet ministers at the time, withdrew their candidacy.

Najafi, a mathematician, is a reformist who was education minister from 1988 to 1997. He then served as the head of the Budget and Planning Organization until 2000. The former board member of Sharif University's school of mathematics won a seat at Tehran city council in 2006.

In his plan proposed for Tehran urban management titled "Tehran: City of Hope, Participation, and Prosperity", Najafi had stated that he would steer clear of politics during his term as mayor.

In an interview with the national TV, he made a commitment to Tehraners to create better living conditions by the end of his four-year term at the municipality.

"I would make use of all the existing facilities to fulfill the citizens' demands which is to live in a reasonable degree of mental and physical comfort," Najafi said.



**Najafi defended his urban policies, specifically plans to increase the city livability as well as establishing a council for implementing smart city projects, saying that citizens will see the results of his proposed plans for the city in the near future.**

## Tehran, Caracas ink pharmaceutical MOU



**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran and Venezuela signed a memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation in pharmaceutical sector.

Iranian Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi and Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Arreaza inked the MOU in Tehran on Saturday.

Exporting medicine to Venezuela, launching joint drug manufacturing projects, registering Iranian drugs in Venezuela and providing specialized training courses are among the main topics of the agreement, IRNA reported.

Touching on the great potential of Iran in health sector and drug manufacturing, Qazizadeh-Hashemi highlighted that Iran's health sector and drug manufacturing ranks first in the region.

Venezuelan companies can use the Iranian expertise to manufacture drugs with their own brands to both satisfy the

domestic needs and raise export revenue.

The minister also expressed Iran's readiness to help Venezuela fight Malaria, saying, malaria took once around 16,000 lives annually in Iran but the figure has decreased to some 60, which are all related to individuals who come from Pakistan.

He also proposed holding an exhibition in Caracas by the title of 'Iran's capabilities in health and medicine sector'.

Arreaza, for his part, highlighted that Venezuela seeks tangible results in health sector through cooperation with Iran.

Referring to sanctions imposed on his country, he added that boosting cooperation with Iran in health sector is a priority for Venezuela.

The only approach for becoming independent in health sector is domestic manufacturing of drugs and medical equipment, he said, adding that they are sure that Iran will back Venezuela in this regard.

## Plans underway to renovate taxi fleet



**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — There are plans underway for renovating the taxi fleet nationwide by replacing some 40,000 old taxis with new ones in the current [Iranian Calendar] year 1397 (March 2018–March 2019), said head of the taxi drivers' union on Sunday.

The successful implementation of the plan depends on increasing budget by the banking system and the administration, ISNA quoted Morteza Zameni as saying.

He went on to say that the taxi fleet's renovation plan started in May 2016 and till the date some 71,000 clunker taxis have been scrapped and some 61,000 new taxis have been delivered to drivers.

Still some 120,000 clunker taxis ply in Iran's cities and their replacement needs allocating increased loans by

banks, he highlighted.

The budget dedicated to the renovation plan doesn't fit the great volume of requests and this has led to impeding the renovation process, Zameni added.

He also touched on plans for using hybrid and electric cars as taxis in current year. "Although these cars are expensive, if we want to fight air pollution, we have to show our determination."

Replacing a fuel-powered car with an electric car will save some 940 million rials (nearly \$19,000) for the country during 10 years, he concluded.

The choking smoke, blanketing the city of Tehran, is attributed to cars, outdated buses, taxis, and trucks, plying the city on a daily basis.

Clunker taxis and buses are required to be replaced with low-emission models to save the Tehraners from breathing the suffocating smoke every day.

## Seven substandard zoos shut down

**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Department of Environment has shut down seven zoos across the country which didn't live up to the required standards set by the department, ILNA reported on Saturday.

The animals residing in these zoos where transferred to standardized centers, said Ali Teymouri, DOE's deputy director for hunting and fishing.

All the zoos and bird parks of the country were investigated some 5 years ago and the results show that some 60

percent of these centers didn't have any kinds of licenses or permits, he highlighted.

All of these centers were granted sufficient time to achieve the required standards, he said, adding that 7 out of 77 centers didn't meet the defined level during this period and where shut down accordingly.

Currently, no new license for zoos or bird parks will be issued until they meet all the standards defined by the Department of Environment, Teymouri concluded.



## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Average children per woman rises in Iran

The average number of children born per woman has increased in Iran thanks to the implementation of proper policies, a health ministry official said on Saturday.

The figure has risen from 1.8 to 2 in the wake of population growth policies outlined by the Supreme Leader, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Esmaeil Motlaq as saying.

"In order to live up to the standards the number should go up to 2.1 children per woman and that's what we are trying to achieve," Motlaq added. Intensifying infants care particularly infants in critical condition are of the effective measures taken by the Health Ministry, he highlighted.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “eco-”

■ **Meaning:** ecology

■ **For example:** Over the past 50 years, humans have changed natural **ecosystems** more rapidly than in any comparable period in human history.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Get at somebody/something

■ **Meaning:** to keep criticizing someone in an unkind way

■ **For example:** He felt he was being got at by the other students.

## IDIOM

### Bottom fell out

■ **Explanation:** used when something causes a plan, project or venture to collapse or fail

■ **For example:** When heavy rain was announced, the bottom fell out of their plans for a beach party.

## افزایش متوسط فرزندآوری زنان در کشور

مدیرکل دفتر سلامت جمعیت، خانواده و مدارس وزارت بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: نرخ باروری با اجرای سیاست های جمعیتی مناسب بهبود یافته است.

محمداسماعیل مطلق روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا گفت: نرخ باروری با اجرای سیاست های جمعیتی ابلاغی از سوی رهبر معظم انقلاب بهبود یافته و متوسط فرزندآوری زنان در کشور از ۱٫۸ به ۲ رسیده است.

وی افزود: طبق استانداردها برای رشد جمعیت باید این رقم به ۲٫۱ فرزند به ازای هر زن در کشور برسد و در زمان حاضر برای بهبود این نرخ تلاش می شود.

وی اظهار کرد تشدید نظام مراقبت از نوزادان و مراقبت های بحرانی از نوزادان در معرض خطر جمله اقدام های موثر وزارت بهداشت برای بهبود متوسط فرزندآوری زنان در کشور است.



# Douma chemical attack: A plot to save terrorists

**INTERNATIONAL** A chemical attack in Douma, the last rebel-held stronghold near Syria's capital, Damascus, has killed at least 70 people and affected hundreds, rescue workers said.

The White Helmets, a group operating in opposition-held areas in Syria, said that most of the fatalities were women and children. "Seventy people suffocated to death and hundreds are still suffocating," Raed al-Saleh, head of the White Helmets, told Al Jazeera, adding that the death toll was expected to rise as many people were in critical condition.

Al-Saleh said that chlorine gas and an unidentified but stronger gas were dropped on Douma.

Terrorists claimed that government forces had dropped a barrel bomb containing poisonous chemicals in the city injuring a large number of civilians but Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Bashar al-Jaafari, said earlier that the Syrian government had information that terrorists are planning for a wide-scale terrorist attack with chlorine gas to accuse the Syrian Arab army of it.

Speaking at the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) meeting, al-Jaafari added that terrorists have strict instructions from western and Turkish intelligence agencies to fabricate a terrorist attack with chlorine gas before March 13th, the date on which the 87th session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will be convened.

**■ Fabricated reports**  
Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday reports of a gas attack in Syria were bogus and any military action taken based on such "invented and fabricated excuses" could lead to severe consequences.



"The spread of bogus stories about the use of chlorine and other poisonous substances by [Syrian] government forces continues. Yet another such fabricated piece of information about an alleged chemical attack in Douma appeared yesterday," the ministry said in a statement.

"We have warned several times recently against such dangerous provocations. The aim of such deceitful speculation, lacking any kind of grounding, is to shield terrorists ... and to attempt to justify possible external uses of force."

Turkey also condemned the use of chemical weapons in Douma, a rebel-held town in Syria's eastern Ghouta, the foreign ministry said in a statement Sunday.

**■ Won't 'take anything off the table' in response to Syria attack**

Meanwhile, one of the United States President Donald Trump's top homeland

security advisers said on Sunday the United States will not rule out launching a missile attack in response to new reports about a chemical attack on a rebel-held town in eastern Ghouta, Syria.

"I wouldn't take anything off the table," White House Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser Thomas Bossert said in an interview on ABC's "This Week."

"We are looking into the attack at this point," he said, adding that the photos of the incident are "horrible."

**■ Syria reaches deal for rebels to quit Douma**

In another development, Syria's government has reached an agreement for rebels to leave their battered holdout of Douma for an opposition-held town in the country's north, state media reported on Sunday.

The official news agency SANA, citing a government source, said the agreement

would see "the departure of all so-called Jaish al-Islam terrorists to Jarablus within 48 hours".

In exchange Jaish al-Islam (Jaysh al-Islam/Army of Islam/Brigade of Islam) would release hostages it had been holding, the source said. SANA reported dozens of buses were already entering Douma to begin the evacuations.

Meanwhile, Syrian government troops, supported by allied fighters from popular defense groups, have managed to establish full control over Rayhan town in the East Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus.

A Syrian military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that Syrian soldiers and their allies carried out an operation against the positions of the so-called Jaish al-Islam Takfiri militants in the town, which lies east of Douma, on Sunday, triggering a fierce exchange of gunfire with the extremists.

The source added that Syrian army troops also regained control over the main road between Ibn Sina Hospital and Douma, which serves as an important supply and movement route for militants.

Eastern Ghouta, a besieged area on the outskirts of Damascus which is home to some 400,000 people, has witnessed deadly violence over the past few months, with foreign-sponsored militants launching mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent humiliating defeat.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri militant groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

## Assad sole political representative of Syria: Aoun

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said on Sunday that Lebanon should "engage with" the Syrian regime as the sole authority in Syria, as the foreign instigated war in the country continues into its eighth year.

"Bashar Assad is currently the president of his country," Aoun said in an interview with members of French news media at Baabda Palace, according to a statement released by his press office. "We must engage with the existing government - we have no other choice," he said, responding

to a question about Assad's political future.

The interview with Aoun was published a day after a chemical attack probably carried out by the opposing militants in the eastern suburbs of Damascus killed at least 80 people in one of the last remaining opposition-held districts of the Syrian capital. Aoun made no mention of the chemical attack in Sunday's statement.

Aoun added that "Lebanese-Syrian relations are limited, but as long as President Assad remains in power, we recognize him."

"There is no other representative of Syria," Aoun said.

Aoun also fielded questions on a number of other issues, including the \$11 billion in funds gathered at Friday's CEDRE conference in Paris - funds that Aoun stressed would help Lebanon with a number of economic woes, including hosting more than 1 million Syrian refugees. "The Syrian refugees can return [home]," he added, "as the military confrontations are confined to small, specific areas."

(Source: The Daily Star)

## Sayyed Nasrallah speaks in "Loyalty to Victory" ceremony

The Secretary General of the Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah delivered a speech to the crowds on Sunday afternoon during an electoral ceremony in the southern town of Nabatiyeh.

"Loyalty to Victory" ceremony is to take place in the southern town's Ashura square at 5:00 pm (Beirut time).

The Hezbollah Secretary General Nasrallah

is to tackle the parliamentary race which is due next month in Lebanon.

Nearly 1000 Candidates are running in the heated contest across 15 electoral districts. The resistance movement of Hezbollah

candidates are in an alliance with Amal movement's (Hope Movement) candidates forming united lists dubbed "Hope and Loyalty Lists".

(Source: Al-Manar)

## The United States is an oligarchy, not a democracy



### ARTICLE

By Sergio Alejandro Gómez  
Journalist

**HAVANA** - The country that presents itself as a universal model of democracy does not meet the basic standards of a system in which the majority makes decisions.

"The government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich." By replacing the term "people" in Abraham Lincoln's well-known phrase with those who have real power in the United States, we gain a more exact idea of how U.S. politics and society work.

Progressive thinkers have been warning for decades that it is money that pulls the strings in Washington; while the democratic system, since the country's founding until today, is a mask to conceal the interests of the rich minority.

The striking thing is that this idea has now spread to sectors of the U.S. intelligentsia that in no way could be labeled as leftist.

Interest in this issue has grown since the arrival of New York billionaire Donald Trump to the White House, and the implementation of his tax reform plan that benefits the mega-rich to the detriment of many low-income voters, who contradictorily put him in the Oval Office.

But the data has been in existence for some time. A study carried out in 2014 by Martin Gilens, of Princeton University, and Benjamin I. Page, of Northwestern University, demonstrated that elites always fare better than the middle class in political decision-making.

After checking thousands of legislative bills and public opinion surveys of recent decades, Gilens and Page found that any policy change with little support from the upper class has about a one in five chance of becoming law, while those backed by the elites triumph in about half of occasions, even when they go against majority opinion.

The academics noted, "When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose. Moreover, because of the strong status quo bias built into the U.S. political system, even when fairly large majorities of Americans favor policy change, they generally do not get it."

This reality explains the difficulties the movement of young people in favor of gun control currently faces to obtain the support of legislators, who receive millions of dollars from the National Rifle Association and other conservative groups that consider carrying a rifle a symbol of the American way of life.

And the differences that are demonstrated in politics are getting bigger in the economic sphere.

The conservative Hudson Institute, reported in 2017



that the wealthiest 5% of U.S. households held 62.5% of all assets in the country in 2013, compared to the 54.1% they had three decades before. That is to say, the richest families are becoming even richer.

But even more noteworthy was the finding of academics Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, who in their research on inequality found that the wealthiest 0.01% controlled 22% of all wealth in 2012, when in 1979 the figure was just 7%, according to a recent BBC report.

Such data shatters the myth of U.S. democracy, in which decisions must be made based on the view of the majority.

On the contrary, the United States shows the clear characteristics of an oligarchy, a system in which power is in the hands of a few people who generally share the same social class.

**■ Elections in the United States: the most expensive show in the world**

However, the study by Gilens and Page does not go much further, and points out that "Americans do enjoy many features central to democratic governance, such as regular elections, freedom of speech and association."

However, even those basic pillars of the U.S. system are foundering, and are not enough to convince anyone.

The last presidential elections showed once again how, due to the complicated U.S. Electoral College system, a candidate who receives less national support than his or her rival can end up the winner. Democrat Hillary Clinton secured almost three million more votes than Trump at the national level, and was still defeated.

Not only that, but in recent decades an organized plan has been carried out to make it more difficult for African-Americans, Latinos, and poor sectors to vote.

The reconfiguration of voting districts is a habitual practice that restricts citizen participation and guarantees the pre-eminence of the elites despite their numerical inferiority.

The financing of election campaigns, which in the end entails the support of legislators, further widens the gap.

The ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case Citizens United v Federal Electoral Commission revoked the legal

limits that prevented companies, non-profit organizations, and trade unions from financing electoral campaigns.

This opened the way for the so-called super PACs, which are today the real protagonists of presidential and legislative elections.

According to official figures, more than 2.4 billion dollars were spent on the last presidential race, and it is estimated that an additional 600 million dollars was invested, the origin of which is unknown.

This reality sparked former president Jimmy Carter to lament that any candidate to the Presidency of the United States needs at least 200 million dollars to set foot on the path to the White House.

"There's no way now for you to get a Democratic or Republican nomination without being able to raise \$200 or \$300 million or more," Carter told Oprah Winfrey on her talk show in September 2015.

The book Dark Money by journalist Jane Mayer, which has become a bestseller, also clearly describes how the U.S. political system is dominated by dollars, which implies that even the most modest attempts to tackle climate change, gun control, etc., fail before the real power of the oligarchy.

Mayer destroys another thesis that sustains supposed U.S. democracy, claiming that the political thought of the elites and the middle class is very similar.

In her investigation, the journalist describes how huge fortunes, mainly of the conservative classes, are invested in intellectuals, think tanks and universities to elaborate and socialize their reactionary ideas, and that these are assumed naturally.

They even go so far as to hire "scientists" to counteract proven hypotheses such as the role of human beings in climate change or the damage to health caused by certain products.

**■ Democracy made in the USA**

Despite the overwhelming evidence, Washington still tries to sell itself as a global reference of an open political system that guarantees the rights of its citizens.

"Democracy" is perhaps the most advertised export product under the Made in USA label. The United States has spent billions of dollars since the end of World War II to impose regime change and destroy any alternative project to that of neoliberal capitalism, based on the uniqueness and universality of its political model.

Continental institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Summits of the Americas have in the political organization of Washington the yardstick to measure the rest of the countries and classify them as democratic or not, according to their rules.

However, U.S. elites can no longer deceive their academics or their own citizens, as they increasingly see through the blindfold imposed by the mass media. Will they manage to continue to fool the rest of the world.

## Hungarians vote in parliamentary elections in 'test for Europe'

Hungarians are heading to the voting booth to cast their ballots in elections that have been billed as a test for the country and Europe, with opposition parties hoping to remove the ruling Fidesz party.

Polls opened at 6am local time (04:00GMT) on Sunday and will close at 7pm (17:00GMT).

Sunday's elections have been highly contested, with opposition parties struggling to form an electoral alliance capable of overcoming incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Orban's increasingly far-right Fidesz.

Hungary, where there are more than eight million registered voters, takes to the ballot box every four years to decide on the 199 seats in the country's parliament.

With far-right and populist parties making gains in a spate of recent European elections, including in Italy and Austria, analysts have speculated that Orban's anti-migrant and "illiberal" policies could have long-lasting implications for the European Union (EU).

Running against Orban is a hodgepodge of liberal and center-left parties as well as Jobbik, the far-right party with neo-Nazi roots and a lengthy history of anti-Semitism.

In advance of the vote, the prime minister urged voters to "save Hungary".

Orban's campaign has focused largely on issues like migration and George Soros, the Hungarian American billionaire and philanthropist who Fidesz accuses of encouraging refugees to flood the central European country.

As of February 15, upwards of 415,000 Hungarians living abroad were registered voters, according to the Budapest Beacon news site.

While Fidesz appears slated to maintain a majority, it remains unclear if the incumbent ruling party can maintain a supermajority of two-thirds support.

In February, the Hungarian government introduced a package of proposed laws targeting NGOs funded by Soros.

If Orban's government maintains its control of the parliament, it is expected to pass through the bill - dubbed "Stop Soros" - which would place a 25 percent tax on NGOs that encourage or support "illegal immigration".

The laws also propose banning entry to Hungary for foreigners who are alleged to encourage refugees and migrants to come to the country.

It would also empower the government to fine or ban NGOs that fail to undergo a security check by the country's intelligence services.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Saudi regime prosecutor launches probes into alleged graft cases

A House of Saud regime official says the public prosecutor has begun investigations into alleged corruption cases involving detained princes and businessmen who have not reached settlements with the government.

Saud al-Hamad, deputy attorney general for investigations, told the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat newspaper on Sunday that those charged will be referred to court for prosecution on charges of money laundering or terrorism.

He also complained that some of the high-profile Saudi figures under investigation had failed to respect confidential agreements while others committed further, unspecified, offenses.

Hundreds of influential Saudi businessmen and members of the royal family were rounded up in November 2017 in an alleged "anti-corruption campaign" spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

Observers said the campaign was actually meant to consolidate bin Salman's power and silence his critics. There have been reports of the senior Saudi figures being beaten and tortured while in custody at Ritz-Carlton Hotel in the capital, Riyadh.

The purge sent shockwaves through Saudi markets, with reports saying many billionaires moved their assets out of the region to avoid getting caught up in the crackdown.

The Riyadh regime then began securing cash settlement deals with the detainees, receiving hefty amounts in exchange for their freedom.

In a statement in January, Saudi regime Attorney General Sheikh Saud al-Mojeb said out of 381 people originally detained in the crackdown, 56 remained in custody.

Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, who ranks among the richest men in the world, was released in January around two months after his arrest. He refused to divulge the terms of his release.

However, the Kingdom Holding Company, run by bin Talal, said in a bourse filing late last month that the billionaire prince had given up full entitlement of his share of proposed annual cash distributions.

"Prince al-Waleed gave up his full entitlement of his share of the proposed annual cash distributions, which totaled ... 8.50 halalas per share (or) 299.2 million Saudi riyals (\$79.8 million) quarterly," it said.

(Source: Press TV)

## Making the world safe through censorship

**8 →** We've been reassured that YouTube and Reddit will be recruiting "unbiased experts" to monitor content for unsafe, dangerous "gun-issues" and hate speech from radical and terrorist sources. These "censors" will also likely be promoting and endorsing "common sense gun solutions" like those enacted by David Helsel, superintendent of the Blue Mountain School District of Harrisburg, Pa., by supplying each classroom to have a 5 gallon bucket of river stones for defense.

To be fair, YouTube and Reddit need to consider banning all unhealthy, unsafe and politically incorrect video content including, how to make a banana cream pie (promotes heart disease), how to mix drinks (enables drunk drivers), how to make your own auto repairs (non-professionals can turn vehicles into deadly weapons), how to sharpen knives (turning a butter knife into a serrated assault weapon) and how to throw river stones against teachers who assign too much homework.

As the peace-loving candidate, Barack Obama rhetorically said in Philadelphia on June 14, 2008," if they bring a knife to the fight, we bring a gun "

(Source: The Washington Times)



## Man City must move past United defeat quickly - Danilo

Manchester City do not have time to mull over Saturday's 3-2 Premier League defeat to bitter rivals Manchester United and must concentrate on winning their Champions League tie against Liverpool on Tuesday, defender Danilo has said.

City could have sealed the league title with a win over their neighbours at the Etihad Stadium but United's spectacular comeback, led by a brace from midfielder Paul Pogba, in the second half delayed their title celebrations. Pep Guardiola's side now turn their attention to overcoming a 3-0 deficit when they host Liverpool in the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final tie.

"There's a feeling of sadness and disappointment... But we must turn the page as soon as possible because we have another big challenge on Tuesday," Danilo told City's website.

"I could tell you many reasons why we didn't win... We win together and we lose together. "We have to focus on what we did wrong and we must improve, but we must not forget what we did all season."

The result marked City's second consecutive defeat in the space of a week and their first home league loss in 16 months.

The former Real Madrid full-back also urged City's fans to maintain the roaring atmosphere against Liverpool.

"They were amazing today and have been fantastic all season and they can help us so much," Danilo added. "If they can repeat that against Liverpool it will give us a huge lift."

City could seal the league title if they beat in-form Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday, provided United suffer an unlikely defeat against bottom side West Bromwich Albion the next day.

(Source: Mirror)

## Pique 'not going to sleep' over Zidane and guard of honour spat

Gerard Pique has poked fun at Zinedine Zidane's refusal to give Barcelona a guard of honour in the Clasico next month , claiming the decision will cause him to lose sleep.

Zidane has said Real Madrid will not give the Catalans the customary show of recognition ahead of the La Liga meeting at Camp Nou in May, assuming Barca have won the title by then.

The Frenchman this week accused Barca of breaking tradition when they refused to hold a guard of honour following Madrid's Club World Cup win in December. But Pique, speaking after his side's 3-1 win over Leganes on Saturday, did not appear unduly affronted by Zidane's decision. "I'm not going to sleep tonight," he replied with a smile when asked about the issue by Movistar Partidazo .

Barca's win, which came courtesy of a hat-trick from Lionel Messi, saw Ernesto Valverde's side equal the La Liga record of 38 consecutive matches without defeat .

The result also gives the league leaders a 12-point lead over Atletico Madrid, who face the reigning champions in the derby on Sunday. "The all-time unbeaten record is the result of getting things right all season," said Pique. "We had a great first half and then eased off in the second. The important thing is that we are still comfortably poised at the top of the table."

(Source: Goal)

## Torino 1 Inter 0: Ljajic strike stuns Champions League chasers

Inter missed the opportunity to move into third in Serie A as they were beaten 1-0 by Torino despite a strong display at Stadio Olimpico. Roma's defeat to Fiorentina on Saturday had opened the door for the Nerazzurri to climb the table, but they failed to make their first-half dominance count as a goal from their former loanee Adem Ljajic sealed an unlikely home victory.

Luciano Spalletti's Inter were on top from the off but, after missing chance after chance, Torino took their first opportunity through Ljajic and then grew into the game.

Ljajic could well have added a second, before the visitors rallied again and fell just short of the equaliser that would have taken them up the table and closer to Champions League qualification.

Having wasted numerous openings against rivals AC Milan on Wednesday, too, Inter must hope they will not rue this week come the end of the season, with Lazio - in action later on Sunday at Udinese - hot on their heels. The tone was set after 11 minutes when Salvatore Sirigu spilled a cross at Ivan Perisic's feet, only for the winger to send a tame lob back into the grateful arms of the goalkeeper.

Sirigu was rather more impressive with an instinctive reaction stop to turn Mauro Icardi's 12-yard volley over the top, before parrying away an Andrea Candreva strike.

The visitors kept the pressure on and Perisic's towering header from a right-wing corner clipped the crossbar.

Candreva's swirling effort tested Sirigu again and Joao Miranda's blushes were then spared by a tight offside call as he somehow smashed against the post from Icardi's knockdown.

(Source: Soccerway)

## Valverde happy to keep Messi busy after Leganes hat-trick

Ernesto Valverde revelled in having hat-trick hero Lionel Messi at his disposal from the start in Barcelona's 3-1 win over Leganes.

The Argentina forward suffered a muscular problem while away on international duty at the end of March, forcing him to miss the friendlies against Italy and Spain.

Messi came off the bench to spare his side from defeat against Sevilla last weekend, helping his side rally from a two-goal deficit to grab a draw, and played the full 90 minutes in the midweek Champions League win over Roma.

Valverde decided against resting his star player for the LaLiga clash with Leganes on Saturday – and watched on as the club's all-time leading scorer bagged a treble.

"We think he's fine and scoring goals always helps everything," Valverde said of Messi's health after the game at Camp Nou.

"He has to be active, but he's fine."

(Source: Four Four Two)

# Jupp Heynckes's return made Bayern into slick champions once again



For Bayern Munich, Mia san Mia – the Bavarian dialect and the club's motto, a slogan for their unerring unity – became Mia san Meister, commonplace these days, after they racked up their sixth successive Bundesliga title. The cries of campeones, that could be heard from inside a throbbing away dressing room at the Augsburg Arena and the conga, led by Juan Bernat and Rafinha, that snaked around the pitch, in front of those delirious supporters cherishing another domestic crown, are the fruits of another season that, for a club defined by trophies, is only just starting.

In-house, however, celebrations were purposely low-key. The players embraced, enjoyed a post-match (non-alcoholic) beer, according to Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, or two, but, generally, this was a brief kind of bliss, more so a nod to having scribbled a tick in the box.

Yes, they boogied to Billie Jean and Stayin' Alive and they clearly enjoyed the occasion, cradling a championship shield made of cardboard, without prolonging the party.

For Bayern and Jupp Heynckes, the 72-year-old manager who is expected to call it quits – again – in the summer, it is still possible to replicate the incredible treble they managed five years ago.

It is no surprise then that Bild billed Heynckes, who has won 19 of 22 league matches this season, as the Vater des Erfolgs – the father of success, and Kicker described him as der Baumeister, the master architect, a man who, to use their analogy, "made a stuttering Ferrari slick again".

If they can sweep aside Sevilla, they will reach the semi-finals of the Champions League on Wednesday, and possibly the DFB-Pokal final the week after. As proved by the pre-cursor to sealing the title, that 6-0 demolition job against Borussia Dortmund, Bayern are, as many feared, champions in their own stratosphere.

Hence why, this week, Uli Hoeness scoffed at the idea of introducing play-offs in a bid to make the division more exciting, less predictable. In some quarters, Bayern's 28th German championship is regarded as ein Armutszeugnis, a damning indictment of the state of the Bundesliga. As Franck Ribery, who clinched his eighth title on his 35th birthday put it, by winning the league,

they have merely achieved only their first objective this season. "The joy was already there," Thomas Müller said, adamant he and his team-mates are determined to celebrate, "but only in May".

The overarching aim, underwritten by Bayern's staff and players is to become des Dauerschampions, perennial winners. Ribery and Arjen Robben – at the club for nine and 10 years respectively – are expected to earn new contracts, the chief executive Rummenigge all but confirmed amid the celebrations. "What we have experienced over the past six years is a dream," Rummenigge, who said he would enjoy a celebratory cigar at home, enthused. "Jupp has done a phenomenal job. And yet the merry-go-round continues, we still want more [trophies] this year.

After an indifferent start to this campaign under Carlo Ancelotti, crushed by Paris-Saint

Germain in Europe and trailing Dortmund by five points in the league, Bayern have prospered after a return to the customary-cool manner in which they dispatch teams, even when pegged back, as they were on Saturday afternoon. As Süddeutsche Zeitung painted it, the route here was "first bumpy, but then darn commanding".

But that comical own goal by Niklas Süle was never going to prove a party-pooper, for this Bayern team are scarcely spooked, rarely rattled. Post-match, Rummenigge cited the squad's confidence – "they are not arrogant" – as well as their professionalism, while there was a classy touch by Heynckes, saluting his predecessor, Ancelotti. "He is not only an outstanding coach but also an outstanding person," Heynckes said, before Ancelotti returned the niceties.

In six months, Bayern's tried and tested formula, almost a back-to-basics approach

has unequivocally paid off. Previously on their way out, Ribery and Robben, whose current contracts expire in June, have relished the responsibility of being entrusted to do damage going forward, alongside Sandro Wagner, who has five goals in five starts since arriving from Hoffenheim in January. In central midfield, Javi Martinez has flourished defensively and, slightly further forward, Arturo Vidal has too, adding goals to his game. At the back, Heynckes has strengthened the centre-back partnership between Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng, re-established as one of the meanest pairings around in recent weeks. In goal, Heynckes has had to rely on the previously derided Sven Ulreich – having been unable to call upon Manuel Neuer, who returned to training this week – and even the 37-year-old, already once retired (does that sound familiar?) Tom Starke.

(Source: Guardian)

## Guardiola says derby loss shows how tough it is to keep going every match



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Saturday's 2-3 derby defeat by Manchester United shows that winning the Premier League isn't as easy as his team have made it look this season.

City could have wrapped up the title with a victory but instead they suffered their first home defeat this season, giving up a two-goal lead in the process and leaving them possibly needing two more wins from their last six games.

"For the fans it is tough and maybe we are going to get more credit if we are able to win the Premier League and people will say how tough it is to win," Guardiola said after the game.

"In November-December everybody said the Premier League is done. But it was a tough, tough fight to keep going every weekend to be focused. This is the first time we lost two games in a row."

With United having closed the gap, a win at Tottenham Hotspur next Saturday for City will not be enough for the title, provided that Jose Mourinho's team take care of business against bottom club West

Bromwich Albion the next day.

While it was a bitter occasion for City's fans, who had hoped to lord it over their cross-town rivals, Guardiola said some perspective was needed. He also turned his mind quickly to Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final tie with Liverpool, which City trail 0-3 from the first-leg.

"Of course we are sad for ourselves, for our fans - but we still have 13 points advantage and goal difference," he said.

"We have to win two more games and after the game on Tuesday we are going to focus on the Premier League to try as quick as possible to get it."

Guardiola's mind was partly on Liverpool before the derby as he made four changes to his team and rested key midfielder Kevin De Bruyne, who like Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus was restricted to a late substitute appearance.

The former Barcelona coach said his team had paid the price for not taking their chances during a first half in which they dominated.

(Source: Express)

## Conor McGregor officially stripped of UFC title

Conor McGregor's rough week got even rougher Saturday night. Just days after spending Thursday in jail following an incident at the UFC 223 media day, the Irish striker was stripped of his UFC lightweight title.

UFC President Dana White announced the news at the UFC 223 post-fight press conference, flatly stating that Khabib Nurmagomedov is now the undisputed lightweight champion.

McGregor stunned the MMA world Thursday when he arrived in New York with an entourage, went to a scheduled UFC 223 press event and proceeded to throw a hand truck through the window of a bus carrying a number of fighters set to compete.

Two were left injured from broken glass (Michael Chiesa and Ray Borg), and McGregor now faces charges of "felony criminal mischief and misdemeanor counts of assault, attempted assault, menacing and reckless endangerment," per the New York Post.



Officially, the move doesn't have anything to do with Thursday's fracas.

White suggested last month that McGregor's reign as lightweight champion was set to end following UFC 223

due to inactivity.

While that was a disingenuous stance—McGregor is currently embroiled in a contract dispute with the promotion and faced Floyd Mayweather Jr. in a boxing match that the UFC had a hand in promoting in August—there is no question his continued absence from the cage stalls the lightweight division at a time when it is overflowing with contenders.

Still, if there was any hope McGregor would retain his title, it likely died the second he was cuffed.

What does the future hold for McGregor? According to White, the UFC was targeting a September return for the now-former champion, but with McGregor's legal status up in the air, he is now uncertain.

McGregor is scheduled to return to court in New York on June 14. Don't expect any details on his return to the Octagon until then.

(Source: Bleacher Report)



# I want to dedicate the title to Persepolis fans: Branko Ivankovic

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football coach Branko Ivankovic says that he wants to dedicate title in Iran Professional League (IPL) to the club's fans.

Persepolis claimed the IPL title with three games to spare on Saturday after defeating Padideh in Mashhad's Samen Stadium.

Vahid Amiri scored the only goal of the match in the 77th minute.

Persepolis claimed the title for the second successive year.

"We knew that we would win the title from two months ago. I would like to congratulate our players, staff and the fans. I want to dedicate the title to our fans," Ivankovic said in the post-match news conference.

"I hope we celebrate a splendid title ceremony in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in front of our fans. I also want to thank my captain Jalal Hosseini since he has won six titles in Iran Professional League and is the most decorated player in Iran league," the Croat added.

"We are in our best form since we started the season with a trophy in Iran's Super Cup and also advanced to the AFC Champions League semis. Now we've won the Iran Professional League title for the second successive year and have advanced to the AFC Champions League Round of 16 in the current season," Ivankovic explained.

"I'm very happy because we won a difficult match in Mashhad. I feel very proud because all of this is the result of hard work," Persepolis coach explained.



© Tehran Times/ Asghar Khamseh

## Iran 7th at FIBA U16 Asian, Australia claim title



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran defeated Lebanon in 7-8 classification game of the FIBA U16 Asian Championship on Sunday.

The Iranian team beat Lebanon 95-82 at the Foshan Lingnan Mingzhu Gymnasium.

Jalal Agha Miri led Iran with 30 points and Rayan Zaine Zambaka scored 18 points for Lebanon.

Australia claimed the title after defeating China 91-67 in the com-

petition's final.

Earlier on the day, New Zealand beat the Philippines 76-60 and came third.

Australia and China will be joined by New Zealand and the Philippines at the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup 2018 in Argentina later this year.

The 2018 FIBA U16 Asian Championship was qualifying tournament for FIBA Asia at the 2018 FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup.

## Iran to play Uzbekistan in friendly, Syria match called off



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Team Melili will play Uzbekistan in a friendly match after their match against Syria was called off.

A friendly match between Iran national football team and Syria was scheduled to take place on May 11 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium but the match was cancelled since some Team Meli players will have to represent their clubs in the AFC Champions League.

Carlos Queiroz's men will meet Uzbek-

istan on May 19 in Tehran.

Team Meli prepare for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, where they have been drawn with Spain, Morocco and Portugal in Group B.

The Iranian national football team will open the campaign with a match against Morocco at Saint Petersburg on June 15.

The Persians, meanwhile, face Spain in Kazan on 20 June before meeting Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal in Saransk five days later.

## Iran eyes fourth place in 2018 Asian Games: Masoud Soltanifar

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar says that they want to move one place up in the 2018 Asian Games.

The Iranian delegation came fifth in the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea behind China, South Korea, Japan and Kazakhstan.

Now, the Iranian minister says they are going to improve their previous ranking in the upcoming Asian games.

"We have a busy year ahead of us. First, we will take part in the 2018 World Cup and we want to book a place



in the knockout stage for the first time.

"We know it will be a difficult task but we will do our best to provide facilities for Team Meli to qualify for the second round," Soltanifar said in an interview with msy.gov.ir.

Iran will participate at the 2018 Asian Games as the strongest West Asian country. Soltanifar says they want a better place in the 18th edition.

"We will vie with Indonesia, Thailand and Kazakhstan to finish in the fourth place in the competition," the minister added.

## Schäfer harnessing experience to restore Esteghlal glory

Kuala Lumpur: After decades of experience across four continents, Winfried Schäfer's latest adventure takes him to the Islamic Republic of Iran, where he is tasked with restoring the Asian glory days of Esteghlal Tehran.

"Winnie", as he is endearingly known, made his name as a midfielder in the German Bundesliga, where he played over 400 games with Borussia Mönchengladbach, Kickers Offenbach and Karlsruher FC, before hanging his boots and embarking on a coaching career that would take him around the globe.

Schäfer's first foray into international football saw him guide Cameroon's golden generation to the 2002 African Cup of Nations, before leading the Indomitable Lions to the final of the 2003 FIFA Confederations Cup, which they lost to the hosts France.

Having conquered Africa, it was time for Schäfer to make the move to pastures new. He arrived into the world of Asian football through the gates of UAE side Al Ahli in 2005. Success was instant for the German, as he led the likes of Iranian international Farhad Majidi and Faisal Khalil, the older brother of 2015 AFC Player of the Year, Ahmed Khalil, to the league title.

Delivering Al Ahli's first UAE League title in 26 years could not save Schäfer from being sacked halfway through the following season after a poor run of results. His time

in the United Arab Emirates did not end there, though as Al Ahli's fierce rivals Al Ain came knocking in the 2007-08 season.

Schäfer did not find the same level of success in the league at the Garden City, finishing sixth and third in his two seasons at Al Ain. On the contrary, he delivered in the cup competitions, winning the cup double of the UAE President's Cup and the League Cup in 2008-09 season. His side followed that up with the 2009 UAE Super Cup victory but failed to rise up the league ranks, which led to his eventual axing during the 2009-10 season.

Following a short stint in European football with FC Baku of Azerbaijan, Winnie

returned to Asian football, taking over the Thailand national team in July 2011. His first experience in the east delivered a runner-up finish in the 2012 AFF Suzuki Cup. The War Elephants reached the final but were piped to the title by Singapore following a 3-2 aggregate defeat in the two-legged final.

In the 2014 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, Schäfer's side managed to surprise with a 3-0 thrashing of Oman and a draw with Saudi Arabia but failed to follow up on their results and missed out on qualification for the next round, before losing all six matches in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers leading to a termination of the German's contract.



After coaching Jamaica for three years, Schäfer returned to Asian football in October 2017 with Iranian giants Esteghlal. Since then, he has only lost two matches in 24 games, leading the side from 16th place in matchday seven to second place in matchday 22 of the Iran Pro League.

Where Schäfer has really transformed the Tehran-based side's fortunes is in the AFC Champions League. Pitted in a tough group alongside the competition's last two runners-up, Al Ain and Al Hilal, Esteghlal had their work cut out for them, but the Iranian giants stormed to the summit of the group with a run of five unbeaten games, securing their progress to the next round with a game to spare.

After watching their arch-rivals Persepolis march all the way to the semi-finals last year, Esteghlal look determined to go as far as possible in Asia's top club competition, having last been crowned Asian champions in 1991 when they defeated China PR's Liaoning FC to lift the Asian Club Championship.

With a squad strengthened with the likes of former Juventus striker Mame Baba Thiam and two-time AFC Footballer of the Year Server Djeparov, Schäfer has at his disposal the tools to bring back the glory days of Esteghlal.

(Source: AFC)

## Iran offers condolences to Canada following hockey team crash

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi expressed sympathy for the victims and survivors of a crash involving a bus carrying a Canadian junior hockey team that killed 15 people late Friday.

Of the 28 people on the bus, 15 people were killed and another 13 were injured upon a collision with a semi truck

Survivors were taken to the hospital, where three are currently in critical condition, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

## USA wrestling official disappointed by Iran's absence

USA Wrestling executive director Rich Bender said absence of Iran and Russia at this year's freestyle World Cup is a little bit disappointing,

The powerhouse Russian and Iranian teams were looking to topple the Americans — last year's team winner at the world championships — in Iowa's fabled Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Unfortunately for fans, the Iranians and Russians failed to show up and the U.S., fresh off its first world team championship in 22 years, appears to be in position for a crown that likely would ring a bit hollow.

The U.S. beat India 10-0 and Japan 7-3 in Saturday's opening rounds.

"Our team was poised to do well (even if) Russia and Iran (were here), so that's a little bit disappointing," Bender said.

Iran, the six-time defending World Cup champion, withdrew in March without citing a reason.

Russia dropped out a week ago, saying it didn't have enough time for the visa interviews needed to get the team cleared for the trip to Iowa City.

The absence of Iran and Russia was a blow to a sport that prides itself on getting oft-disparate nations to come together, though Bender said he doubts it'll do much to damage to the relations of the three federations in the future.

(Source: Associated Press)



## Egyptian gets on his bike for World Cup road trip

**CAIRO (Reuters)** — Mohamed "Ibn Nufal" Nufal, 24, kisses his mother goodbye in Cairo's Tahrir Square as he sets off for the World Cup in Russia - on a bicycle.

After about 5,000 km (3,000 miles) and 65 days on the road, Nufal hopes to reach Moscow to see Egypt make its first appearance in the World Cup for 28 years.

Nufal plans to get there via Jordan, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. He will fly over Syria due to the civil war there and will also give Iraq a miss for security reasons.

On his bike, Nufal has packed spare parts, an extra phone, batteries and camping gear. In addition to his tent, Nufal will put up in hostels where he can find them, as well as relying on the kindness of strangers for a bed for the night.

"It is about the road more than the arrival," he told Reuters Television. "If it were just about the World Cup, I would take a plane. It is a great chance for me to see new things."

A group of cyclists and friends escorted Nufal as he started his trip on Saturday, and he hopes many more will offer him help along the way.

After clinching its World Cup spot in October, Egypt will compete on football's ultimate stage for the first time since 1990.

## Danilo: Manchester United resorted to long balls to beat Man City

Manchester City defender Danilo has refused to accept that Manchester United were the better side in the second half of Saturday's derby, and accused Jose Mourinho of resorting to "long balls."

City were well on top in the first half, going in 2-0 up at the interval and wasted a host of chances. But United came back in remarkable fashion in the second half, winning 3-2 at the Etihad to ruin City's hopes of winning the Premier League title against their local rivals.

Asked whether it was a case of United being that much better in the second half, Danilo told CityTV: "I don't agree with you because if you see the statistics of the game, you analyze the game, we had the ball possession, we had the control."

"They just used the long balls, they scored three goals and that all happened today."

"We played the same way we done all the season, we kept the same level of performance, but today it didn't work."

He added: "I could tell you many, many reasons why we didn't win today. It could be missing chances but at the end of the day they scored three goals, we scored two and that's all that counts."

"But we must be together. When we win, we win together and when we lose, we lose together. We need to keep going and [keep] the heads up."

Danilo added that City cannot allow the disappointment of their capitulation to fester given the scale of their Champions League challenge against Liverpool, trailing 3-0 from the first leg of the quarterfinal tie.

"Well, without doubt the atmosphere, the feeling, is of sadness, of disappointment," Danilo said of the dressing room. "We started the game really well, but we must return to the pitch as soon as possible because on Tuesday we have another big challenge to overcome a result."

"Without any doubt [the City fans were great]. We need to thank them all. Not just for today but all the season, but especially the atmosphere they created today was amazing."

"They helped us until the last minute and I am sure they could help us a lot against Liverpool if they are able to create that atmosphere again and try to help us to overcome the result."

(Source: ESPN)



# Fajr festival to honor Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh with Peace Prize

**A R T** TEHRAN – Cambodian documentary film director and screenwriter Rithy Panh, who is also the producer of Angelina Jolie’s drama “First They Killed My Father” about the experiences of a young girl whose family was torn apart by the Khmer Rouge, will receive the Peace Prize of the 36th edition of the Fajr International Film Festival.

“In his films, he has emphasized the need for peace in the world,” the organizers said in a press release published on Sunday.

Panh will attend the festival, which will take place in Tehran from April 19 to 27, to receive the prize.

In a career spanning about 30 years, Panh has directed over 15 films, including “Site 2”, “Cambodia: Between War and Peace”, “Rice People”, “The Burnt Theatre”, “The Missing Picture”, and “Exile”.

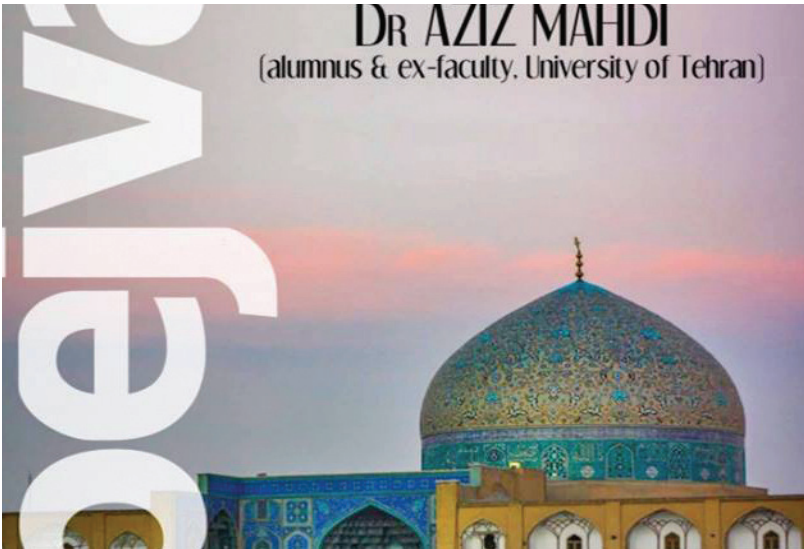
His movies focus on the genocide by the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. As a survivor of the genocide, he put the spotlight on his own story in “The Missing Picture”, was nominated for an Academy Award in 2014.

Due to Jolie’s Cambodian citizenship, “First They Killed My Father” was also selected as Cambodia’s Oscar submission last fall.



Cambodian director Rithy Panh poses at the Bophana Center, a non-governmental organization, founded by Panh, that collects image and sound archives related to Cambodia. (AP Photo/Vann Channarong)

## Iran in photos from Indian scholar Aziz Mahdi at New Delhi exhibit



A poster for “Pejvak, Iran through My Lens” by Aziz Mahdi

**A R T** TEHRAN – Indian poet, writer and photographer Aziz Mahdi is displaying his photos of Iran in an exhibition at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society in New Delhi.

Over 30 photos Iranian people, the country’s historical sites and landscape are on show at the exhibit entitled “Pejvak (Echo), Iran through My Lens”, Mahdi has announced in a post on his Facebook.

The New Delhi-based Mahdi is a doctorate in the Persian language from the University of Tehran. He has taught at the Department of Indian Studies of the University of Tehran for nearly five years.

He has taken the photos during his stay in Iran from 2005 to 2016, while he was a student and a professor at the University of Tehran.

The exhibition will continue until April 12.

## Nicole Kidman joined by Meryl Streep on “Big Little Lies”

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Nicole Kidman has given “Big Little Lies” fans a sneak peak of Meryl Streep in the HBO series.

The 50-year-old actress plays Celeste Wright in the hit drama - which revolves around a group of mothers who become embroiled in a murder in their apparently quiet suburban neighborhood - alongside Reese Witherspoon, Shailene Woodley, Zoe Kravitz and Laura Dern and she has taken to Instagram to share a picture of Streep, 68, joining the cast as Kidman’s mother-in-law.

Posting a photo of the pair in a scene together, she wrote: “First day on the set with Meryl and “my” darling boys! #BigLittleLies [sic]”

Kidman and Witherspoon, 42, previously commented how excited they were to have Streep on board for the role because the part was written with her mind.

Speaking to ‘Entertainment Tonight’, Kidman said: “Reese and I were just [thinking], ‘She would be so amazing in the role!’



“We didn’t think we’d get her. It was written for her and we wanted her. It really is her standing up and going. ‘I support you as women and I believe in you.’

“I think that’s a big statement from her. We’re determined to give her an extraordinary experience. She’s had a lot of experiences so we just want to make it fun for her and vibrant and exciting.”

The first season of ‘Big Little Lies’ received a total of 16 Emmy Award nominations and won eight, including Outstanding Limited Series, and four Golden Globes.

## Pop, country singers reimagine Elton John hits on two new albums

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — More than two dozen Elton John songs have been reinterpreted by the likes of Miley Cyrus, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran, Lady Gaga and Willie Nelson on two albums of past hits released on Friday.

The pop-focused “Revamp” and country-inspired “Restoration” highlight the British singer’s long collaboration with songwriting partner Bernie Taupin, which includes enduring hits such as “Tiny Dancer,” “Rocket Man” and “Candle in the Wind.”

“Bernie and myself are thrilled when singers we admire and respect as much as those on ‘Revamp’ choose to add their own unique twist in the process,” John, 71, said in a statement. “It means that our music is still relevant and ultimately that our songs continue to reach new audiences.”

“Revamp” features a hip hop rendition of “Bennie and the Jets” with John, pop singer P!nk and rapper Logic; British

indie rockers Florence and the Machine perform the soaring “Tiny Dancer;” and Sheeran does a folk version of mourning song “Candle in the Wind.”

“The first time I heard ‘Candle in the Wind’ would have been (Princess) Diana’s funeral,” the 27-year-old Sheeran said in a statement.

“I was six at the time, I remember my dad bringing me in and sitting me in front of the TV and being like this is really important - you have to watch this and you have to remember this,” Sheeran added.

Cyrus, who has roots in country music as the daughter of singer Billy Ray Cyrus, performs on both albums as John handed songs on “Restoration” over to country artists Miranda Lambert, Kacey Musgraves, Little Big Town, Dolly Parton and others.

“Elton is a deep musicologist,” contributor Rosanne Cash,

the daughter of Johnny Cash, said in a statement. “He loves everything from the deepest, most obscure Appalachian songs through George Jones through deep folk music, gospel, early blues.”

John and Taupin began working together in 1967 after they both answered the same Liberty Records advertisement seeking songwriters. They last collaborated on John’s 2016 album “Wonderful Crazy Night.”

Other singers and groups on the albums include Sam Smith, Mary J. Blige, Mumford & Sons, Demi Lovato, The Killers, Dierks Bentley and Emmylou Harris.

“Because of our love of all kinds of music, we’re not stuck in one genre,” Taupin, 67, said in a statement. “From day one we borrowed from everything that’s good about American music.”

Both albums are released through record labels owned by Vivendi’s Universal Music Group.

## Palme d’Or-winning movies to go on screen at Iranian Artists Forum

**A R T** TEHRAN — The cinemathèque of the Iranian Artists Forum will be screening a number of Palme d’Or winners at the Cannes Film Festival in a program during spring, the forum has announced.



A scene from Akira Kurosawa’s “Kagemusha”

The program will begin today with screening the renowned Japanese director Akira Kurosawa’s “Kagemusha”, which won the award in 1980. “Man of Iron” (1981) by Andrzej Wajda from Poland will go on screen on April 23.

On April 30, the British drama “Secrets and Lies” (1996) by Mike Leigh will be screened, and Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami’s “Taste of Cherry” (1997) will come next on May 7.

“The Eel”, a 1997 film by Japanese director Shohei Imamura, “Eternity and a Day”, a 1998 Greek film by Theo Angelopoulos, “The Son’s Room”, a 2001 Italian film by Nanni Moretti, and “Elephant” a 2003 drama film by Gus Van Sant, are among other movies to be screened.

“Rosetta”, a 1999 movie by Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne from Belgium and France is also included.

All the films will be screened in the original language with the Persian subtitles.

The program will run until mid-June.

## Iranian photographers honored at Chinese exhibition

**A R T** TEHRAN — A number of Iranian photographers have been honored at the Huangbai Mountain International Photography Exhibition in China, the organizers have announced.

Soheil Zandazar was named the FIAP (International Federation of Photographic Art) Best Author, while he also received the FIAP Silver Medal for his photo “Innocence a Dream” in the Open Monochrome Section.

Zandazar also received the IAAP (International Association of Art Photographers) Silver Medal for his photo “Dawn” in the Nature Section.

He also won the FIAP Silver Medal for “Morning of Ashura” in the Travel Section.



“Innocence a Dream” by Soheil Zandazar

Omid Farrokh got the IAAP Bronze Medal for “Tefkrin”, while he also received the GPU (Global Photographic Union) Ribbon for his “Sahi 3”.

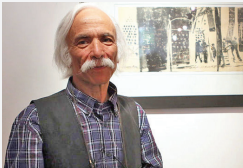
Mahbubeh Karimi Alavijeh got the IAAP Ribbon for “Mumble” and the PSA (Photographic Society of America) Honorable Mention was given to Vahid Babai for “Whisper”.

In addition, Asghar Besharati received the PSA Honorable Mention for his photo “Underwater”.

The exhibition will be held on April 29 in the mountainous region of Huangbai in the Chinese Province of Henan.

The winning works were selected by a panel of juries during a meeting held from March 11 to 15. A total of 240 works have been selected for the exhibition by the jury.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Painter and poet Mohammad-Ebrahim Jafari dies at 78

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian modernist painter and poet Mohammad-Ebrahim Jafari died at a Tehran hospital on Saturday night.

He died of a brain hemorrhage, his wife told the Persian service of ILNA on Sunday.

He was the writer of poem collection “You Sang like a Night Bird and Went”.